



Teaching Dance Lets Me Live My Passion

BY TINA LEAK, LANDFALL RESIDENT, PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR



I'm frequently asked why I spend so much time volunteering in the community or helping friends through my experience and show business connections. I always give the same answer. Because sometimes (like me) art is their passion. The arts allowed me to pursue and make a career out of my passion.

It was so surreal, performing for thousands of people as a teenage Rockette in New York City. Back then we did 30 shows a week—six shows a day during the weekends and four shows a day during the weekdays with Mondays off. Now there are 36 Rockettes in three different lines that split the shows evenly; two shows in morning, two shows in afternoon and two shows in the evening.

This November, as a Legacy Rockette member, I will participate in the 100th Anniversary of The Radio City Rockettes. Then in January, I will begin a second class for new senior tap dancers.

Through the arts, I can give something back to our community. My greatest accomplishments are seeing other people follow their dreams and reach their goals. In July 2023, I began volunteering at the New Hanover Senior Resource Center as a tap dance teacher for group of seven ladies. Today that group called The Hi-Steppers

has grown to 20 enrolled students ages 60-89 with a waitlist of more than 10 dancers.

In May, these talented ladies competed in and won the Brunswick County Senior Arts Follies which qualified them to compete at the State level. On Friday, September 19, The Hi-Steppers won Gold Medals in the North Carolina Senior Arts Follies, during the state's Senior Games held at the Cary Arts Center. With a near perfect score and a roaring crowd of seniors and senior supporters, I'm still beaming with pride and happiness for this special group of ladies.

I had choreographed their award-winning routine that included Rockette-style pinwheels, with more than 19 formation changes that ended with the famous Rockette-style kick line. Our kicks weren't quite "eye-high" like the ones I performed as a Rockette 40 years ago, but the crowd was already cheering before the ladies had finished dancing.

Congratulatory posts began pouring in. One from the New Hanover County Senior Resource Center said, "The Hi-Steppers have a long and proud history here. Each week, they dedicate time and energy to practice, building not only their skill but also a vibrant spirit of fun and friendship. We are so proud of their determination, energy, and spunk that keeps them active and engaged year after year! Congratulations on winning the gold!"

Teaching my passion never gets old.