

Following in her family's footsteps

Teen dancer is third generation to fall in love with ballroom

By DANIELLE VICKERY • Special to The News Journal • June 17, 2010

Though Kyra Isaacs puts her own spin on things, she is definitely her parents' daughter. And her grandparents' granddaughter.

It's not just because the 17-year-old, who began taking ballroom dancing lessons six or seven months ago, is the third generation in her family to do so.

It's also that the aspiring oral maxillofacial surgeon's father, David, and grandfather, Milton, were both former presidents of the Delaware State Dental Society.

Dance has been a part of Kyra's life since she was 4, and she continues to study jazz, ballet and lyrical, which is a type of modern interpretive dance. But most recently, she's begun to take lessons in the international Latin style of competitive dancing at the BlueBallRoom in Fairfax, which includes the samba, cha cha, rumba, paso doble and jive.

She said there's so much about dancing that she loves.

"It's really athletic, so it's just really fun for me to let go and exercise, and it's like an art," Kyra said. "You can do really anything with it."

Ken Richards, the director of the BlueBallRoom, has known Kyra's parents and grandparents as ballroom dancers for years, he said.

"Kyra came into it right away, approached it as a dancer and said, 'I'm going to utilize my other dancing skills and capitalize on them and become a ballroom dancer,'" he said.

Kyra's parents started ballroom dancing in 1999 after watching her dad's parents do so.

"It just looked like something fun to do -- something social," said Mary Jane "MJ" Isaacs, Kyra's mother, who was a professional ballerina. "Some of our very best friends, we've met through ballroom dancing."

Kyra used to accompany her mom to her dance lessons at the Crystal Ballroom that her grandparents owned. Eventually, it looked like something she wanted to try.

Right now, Kyra said she's taking ballroom dancing lessons for fun, but she said she may eventually compete.

And she knows that as far as her future career is concerned, she doesn't want to do anything that would require her to sit behind a desk all day. As a dentist, her dad doesn't have to.

"I know my dad loves it," she said. "He comes home from work, and he's just so happy about it all the time. You get to have social interaction with your patients, and you get to work with your hands."

Though dance and school, complete with several AP classes for the rising senior at Concord High School, fill up most of Kyra's time, she said she still finds time to enjoy hanging out with her friends.

When people ask MJ what drives her, she tells them: "Dancing makes my soul sing." It's special to have a daughter who shares some of the same passions, she said.

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"She's just a really, really lovely dancer," MJ said. "It just comes out of her soul, too, I think. When she dances, you just really love to watch her dance -- it's not cold. We're very proud of her."



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Kyra Isaacs, 17, a third-generation ballroom dancer, practices with her dance instructor, Emanuele Pappacena, at the BlueBallRoom in Fairfax. (The News Journal/SUCHAT PEDERSON)



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Kyra Isaacs has been dancing since age 4 and was introduced to ballroom by her parents. (The News Journal/SUCHAT PEDERSON)

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Kyra Isaacs' mother, MJ, a former ballerina, started ballroom dancing in 1999. (Courtesy of Kyra Issacs)

FYI

Ballroom is a highly standardized dance form that is organized by the World Dance Council and the International Olympic Committee. There are two internationally recognized styles of ballroom, Latin and Standard, each of which consists of five dance styles. In the Latin style, expect hot, flashy movements, sexy poses and plenty of passion. Latin dances are generally faster-paced, more sensual and have more rhythmic expression than Standard dances, which emphasize elegance and have a strong emphasis on posture. Women in the Latin style are often dressed in short-skirted outfits, while the men wear tight-fitting shirts and pants -- the goal being to emphasize the dancers' leg action and body movements.

Source: Latin and Ballroom Dance Association

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