

# Children with physical disabilities shine at dance camp

It was founded by Samantha Zajac Memorial Fund, Diane Matthews School and West Chester University's departments of kinesiology, theater and dance

By DANIELLE LYNCH  
Staff Writer

WEST GOSHEN — This past summer, 12 girls and boys with physical disabilities participated in the second annual Shining Stars Adapted Camp at the Diane Matthews School of Dance Arts in West Chester.

Shining Stars Adapted Camp was founded by the Samantha Zajac Memorial Fund in conjunction with the West Chester University departments of kinesiology, theater and dance and the Diane Matthews School.

In 2001, Samantha Zajac passed away, according to her mother, Carla. Samantha had a mild case of cerebral palsy. Shortly after Samantha's death, the Zajac family established a fund at the Chester County Community Foundation to

support efforts that would honor her memory.

In 2002, the family worked with teachers and staff at the Westtown-Thornbury Elementary School in the West Chester Area School District to build an outdoor classroom called Sammy's Place, according to her mother. And two years ago, the family started work on the dance camp.

This past summer, 12 girls and boys between the ages of 6 and 14 with physical disabilities attended the camp, according to Carla Zajac.

"It's very difficult for kids with special needs to participate in a typical dance class," she said.

Dance school director Diane Matthews said music and dance helps everyone.

Tina Newman, of North Granby, Conn., and formerly from West



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Chester, had her 7-year-old daughter enrolled in the dance camp.

"It's just one of those things ... it's nice to have that opportunity," Newman said, while watching her daughter through the door's window. "She just likes to do what everyone else is doing," she said.

Leigh Holman, another parent from West Chester, said she was surprised at how the camp engaged her 6-year-old daughter's creativity.

"We all had to rethink our thoughts for dancing," Holman said. "It makes her excited and proud of herself and gives her a sense of accomplishment."

For more information about the dance camp or to make a donation to the Samantha Zajac Memorial Fund, send an e-mail to [ShiningStarsADC@aol.com](mailto:ShiningStarsADC@aol.com).

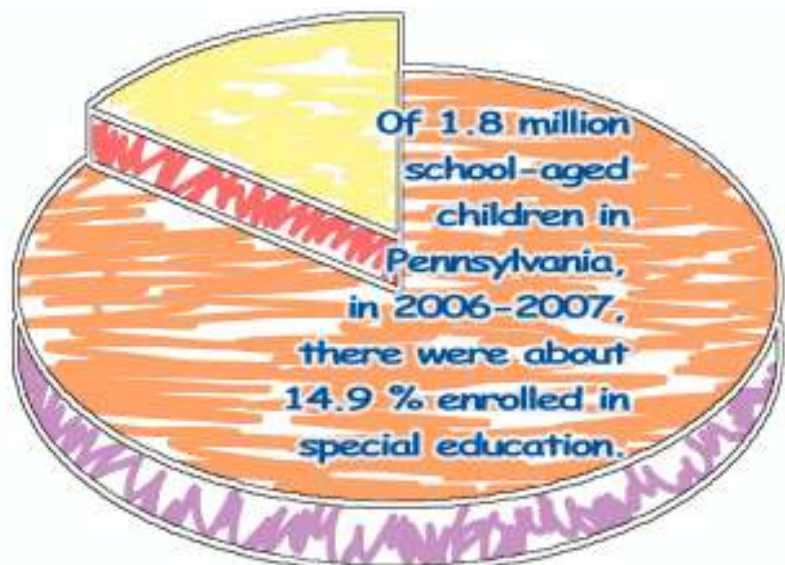
To contact staff writer Danielle Lynch, send an e-mail to [dlynch@dailylocal.com](mailto:dlynch@dailylocal.com).



Above, coaches move the wheelchairs while the children perform dance moves at the Shining Stars Adapted Dance Camp.



At left, coaches teach arm-dance moves at the camp.



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