



## DANCE FOR PARKINSON'S BUILDS LAYERS OF JOY

STORY BY STEPHANIE BROOKS ('11) :: PHOTOS BY RAJAH BOSE

Tamara Pumphrey and I sit in the Crosby Student Center and talk dance. Tamara is unable to speak on the subject without dance sneaking into her body language. Her head sways to a silent beat, her hands trace an unspoken choreography. The movements may be subtle but I spot Tamara's passion instantly. Dancing is not something confined to the studio or stage; it cannot be left at the door. As a dancer myself, I get this.

While we chat, I take the role of interviewer, interested in understanding what this passion means to her: "Dance has always been my form of self-expression. It allows me to understand my body," Tamara says. "In high school I had a hard time with my home life and pressure from friends but as soon as I made dance team my life changed. I had a place to discover myself."

Now a junior, Tamara volunteered with the Dance for Parkinson's program at Gonzaga last spring. The program, founded in 2009, is led by professional dancer Terry Grizzell and brings Parkinson's patients to the Gonzaga dance studio twice a month, where they work with Grizzell and students to learn dance and stretching exercises. Class begins with about a dozen dancers sitting in chairs and Grizzell outlining a sequence of movements. Tamara demonstrates these movements for the class and gives attention to individual dancers. The movements can be surprisingly tricky.

"Heel, heel; toe, toe; to the side, to the side; now repeat," Tamara says, imitating Grizzell as she illustrates the movements. "He'll tell us to swoop down, open the door, reach to the sky. You're twisting your body in such a way that you feel warmed up by the time you're done." Tamara became involved as a prerequisite for her dance minor, but the obligation emerged into something more.

"I was so nervous that first day because I had no idea what to expect," Tamara recalls. "But I fell in love with it. It is a beautiful thing that we can bring together Parkinson's patients and encourage them to move their bodies in unison." Research has shown that dance movement can improve balance and mobility in Parkinson's patients, but Tamara believes the program helps with more than the physical disease.

"I think it helps them to see other people who share the same disease. They feel connected and more like a community."

"To me, it's very freeing," said Susan Croson, (pictured in pink top, at right). "My husband and I used to dance a lot and with Parkinson's you don't dance a lot. In the classes, though, I feel free emotionally, spiritually and physically."

Tamara's work with the Dance for Parkinson's coincides with her post-college plans. A double major in accounting and business administration, she has no intention of abandoning her love of dance and the arts.

"I want to build an organization that offers affordable dance, music, visual art and literature classes to students who need that escape from life, just as I did when I was in high school," Tamara says. She speaks precisely, as if pitching a business plan. "I believe that embracing art forms during this stage of adolescence can stimulate personal development and confidence. I hope that I can call this organization Make Your Pointe one day and offer its programs and services across the region."

"The dance and Parkinson's program here at Gonzaga are hidden gems," Tamara says. "Made up of beautiful people who want to impact each other's lives and share in this passion."





# THE DANCERS

TAMERA PUMPHRIES, ABOVE, IN HER VOLUNTEER ROLE AT THE PARKINSON'S DANCE.