

SwingKidz

SwingKidz Application Information

Application deadline: June 30, 2017

Who May Apply:

SwingKidz is a scholarship dedicated to promoting the future of all types of swing dancing by instilling a love of swing in the next generation of dancers. SwingKidz helps to support young dancers through yearly scholarship grants. The amount of each year's grants is contingent on the success of fundraising efforts in the larger swing community.

Instructors or mentors who have recruited a group of young dancers may apply for the scholarship. In order to apply, the instructor or mentor (applicant) must be willing to donate some of their time (in kind contribution) to training the students and also work with local promoters to provide free or reduced entrance to local dances and events. The young dancers in return are expected to attend the scheduled lessons and practice dances, be available to dance with others graciously, and help the local promoters on occasion in order to give back to the community.

The scholarship will support floor time some group instruction, and additional lessons/choreography with other instructors. It may be extended to pay for other dance related expenses if pre-approved. Additionally, the group of students recruited by the instructor/mentor must agree to work with them for the entire year and be willing to perform/demo at the Boston Tea Party the following year. Students who wish to participate should be between the ages of 14 and 24 and should be a student at no higher than an undergraduate level.

The purpose of this scholarship is to recruit new individuals into the dance community and to give these individuals a strong beginning foundation in swing dance. The expectation is that individuals applying for this scholarship will be at the novice level and not have experienced any significant amount of competition experience. Individuals who are already at an advanced level in competitions will not be considered for this scholarship. Additionally, no family members of an applying instructor/mentor can be included in this scholarship program.

What must you do to apply:

An application is available at www.Swingkidz.org. Additionally, if you have any questions in reference to your application you can email Nanette Sulik at nwsulik@yahoo.com. Instructors/mentors who plan to apply must provide a list of eligible students and an estimated lesson/practice schedule, as well as a short description of your experience teaching swing dance (if you are not a dance instructor, what experience qualifies you to mentor the students? who will be teaching the dancers? and how much support (financial and other) will you provide towards the instruction?) Discuss why you are interested in participating in our program.

In addition, instructors or mentors must be willing to submit to a background check. Students must sign an agreement (student assent with their parents consent if students are underage) that they will commit to attending learning activities, will practice regularly as assigned, and will log their progress through their lessons (written and video notes). It is expected they will submit 2-3 short essays about their experience over the year. An essay about what they hope to gain by participating in this program is required as part of the application. Applicants agree to demonstrate their progress at the BTP the following year.

**** Recipients give permission for SwingKidz to use any video, photo or written submissions for further promotion of the program by accepting the scholarship.***

How do we evaluate applications?

There will be a preselected board of members who will evaluate applications. Scholarships will be awarded based on proposal quality (how well planned and complete), instructor /mentor experience, and student essays. This program is designed to support local efforts to develop a youth dance program. Proposals that recruit less than at least three participants will not be given the same weight as those that recruit three or greater. (We suggest applicants over recruit to allow for attrition.) It is our hope that, after the one-year grant is completed, the local community will continue to recruit and support young dancers in the program, therefore an important part of the proposal is a plan for continuation.

Proposals can support any type/style of swing dancing. There are several programs already existing in the US that offer this type of support for young dancers, we suggest you research how these are run if you need inspiration in writing the proposal. One successful WCS program is the “West Coast Swing Gang” in the Tampa/St Petersburg area. There is another program in the Phoenix area. The Shag community sponsors “Jr. SOS”. The Lindy community has successful programs as well. If an existing program is applying, please discuss how our grant will expand your recruitment and further support your efforts, but keep in mind that our primary goal is to start programs in areas where there is no support.

How do we announce the winner?

Grants will be notified by phone or email when they are selected. Additionally, winners will be posted on www.swingkidz.org

* Winning dancers and one mentor will receive free event passes to the BTP so that they can demonstrate their progress and receive recognition for their achievements. If a program is located geographically far from the Boston area such that it would be very difficult for the group to travel to the event, AND if they can recruit another more local weekend swing event to promote and offer a fundraiser for SwingKidz and to support them by offering event admission and an opportunity to demonstrate, they can opt to demonstrate at their local event instead of at the BTP. (We do require a video of the demonstration to show at the BTP and post on the SwingKidz website).

Our eventual goal is to establish regional scholarships supported by local events and communities creating programs for young dancers throughout the country and the world. But for this year we aim to support one, possibly two small grants.

We are looking for other events or communities willing to support their own SwingKidz style initiative as well as donations. We are a non-profit 501c3 and all donations are tax-deductible. If any community is willing to fundraise to support a local version of this scholarship, we would be happy to extend the program to support your efforts.

History: The inspiration for the program came from Daniel J. Mezrich (1953-2014) founder of the Boston tea Party and Wanna Dance Records. Prior to his death he expressed the wish that a scholarship be established to support young swing dancers.

Dan Mez also known as DJ Mez, was a swing dance promoter in the Boston area. He sold a successful commercial maintenance company in the early 1990's to open Vera's Rhythm and Blues Dance Club featuring West Coast Swing in the elegant Longwood Towers, Brookline. Shortly after, he opened Swing City in Cambridge, which had a regular attendance of 350-400 dancers each week and became the home base for many area Lindy dancers. His goal was to create a venue outside of the dance studio that all dancers could participate in, regardless of studio affiliation. In 1996 he began to market a successful line of CD's featuring compilations of swing music, and created the "Boston Tea Party- a Swing Dance Revolution". This event began as a WCS dance and quickly tripled in size in a few years. Dan, with the help of his partners, added Lindy Hop and eventually Balboa to the event, creating the Crossover event we know today.

Everything Dan did related to dance was intentionally designed to expand, improve and support his beloved swing community. From early on he offered youth competitions and prizes at his events. Dan was always thinking about how he might impact the future of swing dancing in Boston (with his events), and nationally (with his compilations of swing music that were adopted across the country earning him nominations for the prestigious Kenny Wetzel Swing DJ Award three years in a row).

It makes perfect sense that his last request was to establish a program to introduce young people to the dance that meant so much to him for so long. Dan was not one to bask in the spotlight, so rather than choosing to have the scholarship named in his honor, he named it SwingKidz.