

# Dancer's steps enhance children's creative skills

ROLFE (AP) — To Valerie Williams, learning how to be creative is as essential as learning how to eat.

Creativity is a survival skill, the 34-year-old dancer says, not something that's limited to eccentric artists and wacky poets.

Williams believes creativity is needed everywhere — from a Rolfe elementary school class to a Pocahontas County farm. Williams taught dance in Rolfe community schools as an artist in residence.

"Creativity involves using all that we have to use and not just taking into account one direction or way of thought," says the Ames-based artist. People who don't strive to be creative in everyday problem solving shouldn't be surprised by failure, she says. Williams isn't shy about telling dancers what to do. She just doesn't tell them how to do it. That's where the creativity comes in, she says.

"In dance, like in anything, you have to structure an idea

to make it work. Frequently beginners do not know how to get ideas."

Creativity can be taught, Williams says, by providing structures in which people can be creative.

Williams gives her beginning dancers a list of words — such as jump, balance, freeze, fall and roll — from which they choreograph short dances.

This week Williams is devoting most of her attention to Rolfe's fifth-graders and sixth-graders. After a week of learning turns, twists and other dance steps, students will perform several dances to the strains of the Penguin Cafe Orchestra and Mozart's 40th Symphony.

"I choose music that I think kids don't hear," Williams said.

Williams, who received much of her dance training at a Milwaukee conservatory, performs regularly in New York City and Europe. But even though she's seen the

lights of Paris, she enjoys living down on the farm.

"I like being able to do my work here because I don't have to be fashionable," Williams says. "Besides, I make a much better living here than in New York City."

Creative people don't live only in metropolitan areas, Williams says, evidenced by people she's met during her travels.

"I've talked to people in rural Nebraska who have never stopped growing. But I've had uninteresting conversations in Manhattan with people who can't talk about anything except what they had for lunch. They are the people that can't consider other ideas."

Sometimes kids who marvel in make-believe are more willing to be creative by trying new things, Williams says. But kids aren't the only ones who must learn to consider new ideas.

# Diets

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heads the Schneider Institute in Miami. "Recently, a group of fourth-graders was interviewed and 80 percent of them claimed to be on a diet."

Statistics on the burgeoning diet obsession confirm Schneider's theory: At this moment, 48 million Americans say they are on some form of a diet — which breaks down to one in three women and one in five men. While that's down 26 percent over last year, according to surveys by the Calorie Control Council, a trade group of low-calorie food manufacturers, some 98 million Americans regularly eat low-calorie foods and beverages in an effort to watch their weight.

Why such a fixation on excess avoidance? Has a sedentary lifestyle made it harder to balance the ballast or have the media just stuffed us full of images of slim people who lead fabulous lives?

Dr. Len Levitz, the clinical director of Philadelphia's Renfrew Center, a treatment facility for eating disorders, blames the obsession in part on the oft-held theory that thinness is a sign of societal approval and, in many cases, a bellwether of prosperity. "We've been seeing this trend for almost 15 years," says

Levitz. "But every time you think it has reached a peak, it hits another plateau. People view externals as the most important things in life — that can be houses, cars and bodies."

While losing weight is obviously a healthy option for most people, one of the problems is that the whole concept of dieting has become a marketing bonanza. Those dissatisfied with their bodies fuel a multi-billion-dollar diet industry with their fears of fat.

Americans spent \$29 billion last year on weight-loss products and services, according to a report by Market Data Enterprises, a Long Island trade group. That includes monies spent on soft drinks, hospital and other weight-loss clinics, health spas, low-calorie sweeteners, books, cassettes and appetite suppressants.

Weight Watchers, the Jericho, L.I.-based diet conglomerate, for instance, had revenues of \$78.3 million last year, according to the Standard & Poor's 1989 Directory of Associations.

Because there's so much competition for the dieter's dollar, "revolutionary" programs spring up to lure potential pound-watchers. One claims you can lose weight without cutting back on food; liquid diets are available over the counter.

"With everything that's available, people have a hard

time deciding which method to use," says Levitz. "You can end up doing yourself more harm than good with the wrong type of weight-loss program."

Still, to others, this relentless fascination with body dimension is merely an offshoot of the health and fitness craze of the last several years. The rationale is: To eat smarter is to live longer. Slimming down is a desirable side effect.

Two issues lie at the core of the dieting and weight-loss obsession, say the experts: image and control.

"The main reason people diet is that it is the only physical thing about themselves they feel they can control," agrees Schneider. "You can't change your bone structure or your facial characteristics without drastic surgery."

However, you can lose a few pounds off of your hips.

# Dilemma

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me," she said. "I'm not about to go out and spend this money and put something in my mouth and have it show up on the scales."

After an initial loss of 35 pounds in six weeks, Wunderlich does not lose weight every day. But her confidence and pride in herself grows each time she steps on that scale and sees the fruits of her efforts.

"When you lose, it's like, all right!" she said enthusiastically.

The manager of Nutri/System didn't have a weight problem when she started work there. But when Becky Inghram-Nordstrom got engaged about a year ago, the stress made the 5-foot-2, 23-year-old "balloon up" to 145 pounds, she said.

While on the center's diet Inghram-Nordstrom lost 14 of the 15 pounds she had gained in time for the wedding. She has since whittled her weight to 120 pounds.

A weight watcher since high school, Inghram-Nordstrom, Burlington, said other diets did not work for her. She needed the simplicity of a set menu. At Nutri/System, dieters buy all their meals — except produce — from the company. They begin eating regular foods when they near their goal weight. They are also taught how to eat correctly through behavior modification and maintenance programs.

"On the other diets, I was always concerned with foods,"

Inghram-Nordstrom said. "And with this, all I needed to do was pick an item and eat it."

When Mike Karas' frame, 53-inch waist and all, wouldn't fit into a theater seat the 367-pound man decided to try Optifast at Fort Madison Community Hospital.

Optifast is a liquid diet restricted to people who need to lose at least 50 pounds. Talk show host Oprah Winfrey lost 67 pounds on the same diet in November 1988. She has since gained back 17 pounds, according to an Optifast representative who says that amount of success is better than on most diets.

Overweight most of his life, the 6-foot-2, 24-year-old Karas gained 100 pounds in 2 1/2 years when he started a night job in hotel management. He said he would sleep until late in the morning "and then eat all day."

With Optifast, Karas, Quincy, Ill., lost 147 pounds in about eight months. For the past five months he has been supporting 220 pounds on his frame — 30 less than he weighed in high school.

The Optifast program consists of the following steps: 12 weeks of liquid formula intake only; 13 weeks of formula and regular food; and finally intake of ordinary foods. Clients are medically supervised and are taught behavior modification.

Karas said he was initially scared to get off the supplement.

"The liquid part of the diet is so easy and so enjoyable," he said.

# Weigh

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to be effective."

Behavior change includes learning not to turn to food to relieve boredom, depression or discomfort. It does not mean exchanging low calorie food for fattening snacks in those instances, she said.

For example, swapping a package of cookies for a bag of rice cakes in front of the television does not solve the eating problem and will ultimately fail, she said.

"What you're changing there is the food," she said, "not the behavior. Eventually you're going to say it's OK to have a cookie in front of the TV."

Along with breaking bad habits, overeaters need to work on their self-esteem, Evans said.

"You get in touch with the fact that you are not what you weigh," she said. However, she acknowledged that self-consciousness is understandable because society has made overweight people feel like the heavy.

"That concept 'you have to be thin to be in is garbage,'" said

Evans, who added that friends and relatives should offer support and help change the public perception.

One diet program that seems to follow Evans' philosophy is "The Right Weigh" at Burlington Medical Center, which offers individual weight loss and fitness counseling. The program also includes a lecture series by the hospital staff on topics including self-image, behavior modification and the complexity of weight gain and loss. However, contrary to Evans' policy, Right Weigh requires calorie accounting until a goal weight is reached.

"Instead of a diet, we like to think of it as a meal plan," said Right Weigh nutritionist Peg Long.

"A diet is something you go on, to go off again," Long said. "We like to think of it as a continuing thing for the rest of your life."

Like Evans, Long preaches variety and moderation. "If we could do this the rest of our lives," Long said. "Our eating problems could be solved."

Weight Watchers also offers a common sense approach, according to employee Denise Hillman. Dieters start with a low calorie food list that is in-

creased over time until weight loss is achieved.

"We teach portion control and moderation," Hillman said. "There's nothing you can't eat on Weight Watchers."

Hillman said it is unrealistic to expect people to give up their favorite foods.

"Let's face it," she said, "people do eat french fries."

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