

March 19, 2012

YMCA Community School Students Ask: “May I Have This Dance?”



Over the past few months, students from YMCA of Metropolitan Chicago’s six Community Schools have been perfecting their Merengue, Swing, Waltz, Tango and Salsa moves with professionals from May I Have This Dance – one of Chicago’s leading ballroom dance studios – through their “Dancing with Class” youth outreach division. And, on Friday February 17, the students gathered for some friendly competition at the Chicago Cultural Center.

The program is based on the principle that dance has the power to build and strengthen communities, bring people together, and strengthen respect for oneself and others.

“It was truly wonderful to see these young people handle themselves with such poise, and treat their dance partners, teammates and competitors with such respect,” said Eric Werge, director of community schools for the Y of Metro Chicago.

Parents, family, principals and friends came out in droves to support their dancers. Libby Elementary School took home the overall champion award as well as overall presentation award. Overall technique award was presented to May Academy, and superstar awards, recognizing schools for areas of strong performance, were granted to May Academy for the Merengue, Morton School of Excellence for the Waltz, Oglesby Elementary for the Swing, Whistler Elementary for the Tango and Ryerson Elementary for the Salsa.

These kids and others who participate in Dancing with Class at the YMCA Community Schools not only have a great time in a safe program after school, but through this multicultural dance program learn social awareness, confidence, creativity, care and consideration for others and teamwork – all of which was on full display during the competition.

Student dancers, parents and school principals best express the vibe of the evening:

- "I couldn't stop crying watching my students do the Waltz across the floor!"
- *Assistant Principal Rebeka Barrera*
- "The experience at the Chicago Cultural Center was an opportunity for our students to feel special and I was overwhelmed with pride!" - *Principal Kurt D. Jones*
- "I was nervous dancing with the different partners during the Wild Card, but I think my partner and I were ready for it!" - *Dancer Princess Thomas*
- "I am beaming with pride watching the kids!" - *Alexander Owens, Parent*

To learn more about YMCA Community Schools, visit:

<http://www.ymcachicago.org/programs/community-schools/>