



Local dance school takes top honors in the region



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A **group** of young athletes spent months pushing past the pain and working through long practices to come together for a common goal—winning.



Out of the 49 schools that competed in the Youth American Grand Prix (YAGP) Regional Competition in Chicago, Southold Dance Theater in South Bend danced their way to top honors by being named “Outstanding School of the Year” by a group of international judges.

You may not have heard of the small school on the west side, but if you listen closely you'll hear the sweet sound of success, pointe shoes pounding the hardwood, quiet, but intense focus, and the passion for perfection. It's the reason Southold Dance Theater plied their way to the top.

Dance instructor Fiona Cameron-martin, recounts the moment they won, “When they called our name all the kids were cheering, the parents were cheering, I was cheering like mad,” she says.

Fourteen-year-old Theresa Thomas had another reason to cheer, a first place win for her contemporary solo.

“I just heard my name being called and i was like what and everyone was clapping and I was like wait was just happened so it was kind of like an outer-body experience,” says Thomas.

Thirteen-year-old Ben Zusi also received a Top Twelve award for a classical solo.

So how does the small school tucked away on the west-side of South Bend do it?

They get lots of help from parents, caring teachers and students with tons of passion.

“I love it, you come here and you're able to dance and just be free and you don't have to worry about anything,” says Mikaela Fleming.

The students are back in the studio practicing for their next performance, “Don Quixote”, which will debut during the last week in May.

If you want to get your child, daughter or son, to take lessons at Southold, the school accepts students from 3-18.

They're looking for donations for student scholarships also. Visit their [website](#) to learn more.