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Bonnie Gombos Both Heads DAC Dance and, with Husband Jamie, Teaches Martial Arts

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For many in Darien, “Miss Bonnie” is synonymous with ballet, modern, tap, hip hop, jazz and multiple other dance opportunities for youth.

It’s not a surprise, as Bonnie Gombos has been at the helm of the Darien Art Center’s well-known dance department since 2007 and has been teaching dance at the DAC for 23 years.

— *This article was provided by* [Darien Arts Center](#).

First hired as a dance instructor, Gombos soon found herself filling the shoes of original DAC Dance Director Val Pullman when Pullman moved to Maryland.

Already known for its welcoming and creative dance space, Gombos grew the DAC’s dance “family” into

one of the largest dance schools in Connecticut, teaching dance to many generations in Darien.

DAC dance students can begin taking classes as early as 3 years old and can progress through Junior and Senior Dance Companies, with multiple performance opportunities at each level.

Gombos has seen young students progress through classes over the years, many remaining part of the DAC dance family through high school graduation. Many have gone on to dance in college, some returning to teach dance at the DAC, including sisters Jordan and Ashley Cassetta and Danielle Dixon, who created a dance group at her college.

Many instructors have also been part of the DAC dance department for over 15 years, including Marie Maccarone, Elizabeth Hall, Cindy DeForest and Emily Frangipane. Other longtime teachers include Dana Rodriquez and Neeta Vancek.

The family affair expanded for Gombos at the DAC, as her husband, Jamie, joined her in creating the art center's Martial Arts School in 2008. Both husband and wife, who have been studying martial arts for over 20 years, have achieved the ranks of Master (5th degree) in Kempo karate.

Since teaching martial arts classes for almost 10 years at the DAC, they have become a part of many families studying martial arts together and have promoted over 10 black belts.

The couple also created the DAC Martial Arts Tournament, now in its seventh year, where other similar schools are invited for a day of fun competition.

“The DAC has become a place to happily nurture our dance and martial arts families over the years. We like to believe that our students return out of our mutual love of dance and martial arts. Our objective is to provide an enriching experience that students will carry with them throughout their lives,” Bonnie said.

“We also make sure they have fun, get a strong foundation in technique, and are onstage as much as possible.”

The DAC offers multiple opportunities for dancers to perform, including Evening of Dance; Fiona, an original ballet written by Gombos; Scenes from the Nutcracker, a DAC holiday tradition; and So We Think We Can Dance, a totally student-run and choreographed production; in addition to year-end Junior and Senior Dance Concerts.

Gombos continues to expand the dance and martial arts programs, which accept ongoing registration for all ages through adults. In addition to traditional classes of ballet, tap and hip hop, newer classes include Pilates

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and Broadway style dancing for students to hone audition techniques.

“We are always open to incorporating new classes that meet the creative interests of our students,” she said.

For more information about Darien Arts Center classes, visit [the DAC website](#) or call (203) 655-8683. You can email Bonnie at bonnie@darienarts.org. The DAC is located at 2 Renshaw Road, behind the Darien Town Hall.