

# Aiken Standard

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## Dancer lives childhood dream of owning studio

STEPHANIE TURNER

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Staff Photo by Stephanie Turner Morgan Nicole Martin is the owner and a teacher at Dream Dance Academy.

**Editor's note:** *This is part of a series the Aiken Standard will run on local dance studios. To have yours included or to send us suggestions, email Stephanie at [sturner@aikenstandard.com](mailto:sturner@aikenstandard.com).*

A woman sits at her desk and types, glancing over schedules, emails and more.

### Extra Photos

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Staff

Photo by Stephanie Turner Sara Beth Nichols, in front on left, and her assistant Emily

On her desk is a ceramic handmade nameplate with two words painted on – “Mama Jules.”

Julie Perry helped start Dream Dance Academy LLC with her daughter, USC Aiken student Morgan Nicole Martin.

Perry is the studio's office manager. Martin is its owner and director.

Martin has been doing cheerleading, ballet, tap and jazz since she was 3.

Pearson, in front on right, teaching her students upstairs at Dream Dance Academy. Pictured are some of the class' students, from left, Julia Contardi, Jada Lee, Katie Pearson, Molly Westberry and Sara Grace Hunt.



Staff Photo by

Stephanie Turner Morgan Nicole Martin is taking her students through some steps at her studio Dream Dance Academy. Written behind her on the mirror are instructions for the students.



Staff Photo

by Stephanie Turner Eva Buchanan, left, Isabella Bernard and Taylor Hunt are just a few of Morgan Nicole Martin's students at her studio Dream Dance Academy.

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teacher.

Ehmen has studied in Chicago.

Her heart was always set on what is now her daily reality – owning a dance studio.

“When the opportunity presented itself, it worked out so perfectly,” Martin said. “I just didn't know it was going to happen so soon.”

Dream Dance Academy is in its third season.

Martin was 19 when it began.

The school teaches tap, ballet, hip hop, cheer and tumbling.

There are two company groups – one for competitions and one for performing. Both attend competitions and conventions.

The studio puts on at least three shows a year, two that just feature the companies.

One of those company performances occurs every October for Breast Cancer Awareness Month.

Perry and other mothers of the studio have a history with breast cancer. Money from this performance goes toward the Pink Ribbonettes, Aiken's breast cancer support group.

The academy has also been involved with Relay For Life and the American Cancer Society Cancer Dinner.

In March, the companies will put on their Imagination show; in May, all students will perform for their Iconic recital.

Both events are scheduled for the USCA Etherredge Center.

Four other teachers join Martin – Cassidy Chrisco, Josh Hobbs, Sara Beth Nichols and Anna Ehmen.

Chrisco is a former competitive cheerleader, while Hobbs' studies have included ballroom and modern ballet.

Nichols is a student at the Dream Dance Academy, as well as a

"We have a saying, 'If you aren't better from being around us, then we haven't done our job,'" Martin said.

Ehmen used to own the dance company Art of Motion Dance Studio, where Martin was a student and a teacher.

"When Anna Ehmen accepted an out-of-state job and announced that she would be closing her studio early in the summer of 2011, the opportunity that presented itself was too good to pass up," Martin's online biography stated.

The building was already designed as a dance business. Martin and Perry simply had to move in.

When their number of students increased, the partners sought out another location.

The school has resided at 145 Marlboro St. S.E., for more than a year.

Classes are available for ages 3 and older.

An all-boys class is offered.

Registration will open again in the summer. In June, there will be an open house.

"I love sharing my dream with the children," Martin said.

For more information, call 803-649-4420 or visit [www.dreamdanceacad.com](http://www.dreamdanceacad.com).

*Stephanie Turner graduated from Valdosta State University in 2012. She then signed on with the Aiken Standard, where she is now the arts and entertainment reporter.*