

BALLET

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Dallas resident Elisabeth Harris, the children's rehearsal coordinator for the show. "The Nutcracker" has wonderful music. Tchaikovsky's score is amazing. The young and the old enjoy it every year. It really puts everyone into the spirit."

The Back Mountain dancers, who range in age from 9-16, were part of a large number of dancers from the eastern part of the state who auditioned for roles in the performance.

"I'm really excited for the

Back Mountain kids," said Harris. "We have some very good dancers and this is a great opportunity for them."

A local 10-year-old was selected to dance with the Russian ballet company for the second time. This year, Renee Mackunis was cast as a mouse.

"It's really cool because they are from a different country and they are professionals," said Mackunis, who takes dance lessons at Joan Harris dance studio in Dallas. "I did it again this year because it was really fun last year."

Even though she gets butterflies when she's on stage, Mackunis says she likes the experience because she gets to hang

out with new people from other dance studios.

Shavertown resident Lee Riccetti has been involved in the production for five consecutive years. This year, the 15-year-old was cast as a butterfly.

"Me and a bunch of my friends wanted to take part in a professional show," Riccetti said. "It's a once-in-a-lifetime chance. It's exciting to see professional dancers because it helps you want to dance."

According to the Moscow Ballet's Web site, more than 45,000 children have performed along side of these professionals since 2003.

"My first two years I was a party guest, then a mouse and

then a Russian," explained Trucksville resident Katelyn Reinert, who has performed with the Moscow Ballet a handful of times. "This year, I am an angel. I had the most fun as a Russian, but you can't always get the part you want."

The 14-year-old has been taking various types of dance for roughly a decade. She said the

most beneficial aspect of being a part of the show was the audition process, because she thought it was good to know what they are looking for when they cast.

Harris, a dance teacher for more than 20 years at the Joan Harris Center for Gifted/Talented, said the most challenging part of her position was to

make sure the students were rehearsed.

"(They're scheduled) to have only one rehearsal on the morning of the shows with the Russians," Harris said. "There were a lot of new students this time. I enjoyed working with the children. The energy is so high when the kids are looking up to these professional dancers."

BMBPA DONATES TO CHILDREN'S SPREE

The Back Mountain Business and Professional Association recently donated \$1,500 to help the Rotary Club of Dallas hold its annual children's Christmas shopping spree. The shopping spree benefited 45 children from the Dallas, Lake-Lehman and Northwest school districts. The project, which costs more than \$6,500, is also funded by proceeds from the Rotary's charity golf tournament, as well as food booths at the Luzerne County Fair and Dallas Harvest Festival. Attending the check presentation, from left, are Lynn Banta, BMBPA president; Carl Goeringer, BMBPA events chairman; and Sandy Peoples, Rotary Club of Dallas president.



CHURCH BRIEFS

Special music set for Christmas Eve

Kristen Faerber Celusniak will provide special Christmas Eve music during a worship and communion service at 10:30 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 24 at Trinity Presbyterian Church. The church is located at 105 Irem Road, Dallas.

Celusniak is the daughter of Bill and Beth Faerber and granddaughter of Edith Pillarella, all of Dallas. She resides in Norwalk, Conn. with her husband Mark. Celusniak is an active member of the music community and teaches voice and piano at the Darien Arts Center in Darien, Conn. and the Rye Arts Center in Rye, N.Y. She is a member of the Westfair Singers and recently became involved with the Schubert Club of Fairfield County.

Trinity Presbyterian Church organist Pam Carroll, a piano instructor at Wilkes University, will accompany Celusniak. Carroll also accompanies various vocalists and instrumentalists throughout the Wyoming Valley in addition to serving as

the organist at the Dallas church.

The public is invited attend the 10:30 p.m. service or the earlier service at 5:30 p.m. For more information, call 675-3131.

St. Luke's plans Communion service

St. Luke's Reformation Lutheran Church will hold a candlelight Christmas Eve Holy Communion service at 7:30 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 24 at the church on the corner of Market and School streets in Noxen.

Christmas Eve service at CMUMC

The Center Moreland United Methodist Church will hold a Christmas Eve service at 7 p.m., Saturday, Dec. 24 at the church on Creamery Road in Center Moreland. The candlelight service will feature special music and a Christmas message by the Rev. Mary Jean Simonin, pastor. For more information, call 333-

4354.

Russell Hill UMC holding service

The Russell Hill United Methodist Church will hold a candlelight Christmas Eve service at 7:30 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 24 at the top of the hill on Route 6 in Tunkhannock. The service will feature singing, a Christmas message and a candlelight finale. For more information, call 836-2982 or 836-1920.

Awana Club meets at Grace Community

The Awana Club ministry at the Grace Community Church in Dallas meets from 6-7:45 p.m. every Wednesday at the church, which is located across from Chapel Lawn Cemetery on Memorial Highway.

The Bible-based club is open to boys and girls ages 4 through sixth grade. The club consists of Bible teaching, fun, fellowship, games and special events.

For more information, call the church office at 675-3723.

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