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Ballet puts faith afoot with Praise Dance Showcase

**By Special to Whitehaven Appeal
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Ballet on Wheels, the only African-American nonprofit ballet company in Memphis, recently presented the first Praise Dance Showcase at Ridgeway High School on March 19.

The brainchild of the organization is founder and artistic director Chaunice Conner. The event was held to promote the importance and relevance of praise dancing.

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"The Central Baptist Church Dance Ministry won top honors among the nine participating churches," said dance ministry coordinator Andrea

Dandridge. "The dancers have been praising God through dance for five years and have been special guest performers at various events throughout the state of Tennessee and the Mid-South."

The dance team and church, under the leadership of Dr. R. H. Green, is at 320 Joubert in the Riverview-Kansas area of South Memphis.

Organized by Dandridge in 1999 with the purpose of leading people into worship using physical movement as a spiritual motivator, the Dillard University graduate has participated in various types of dance throughout her life and returned to her home to teach praise dance to young girls at her church in using her talent to give back to her community.

"The dance ministry is far more than a group of girls who dance," said Dandridge. "It is a ministry that actively participates in activities to uplift the kingdom of God. The four-point mission of the ministry is to promote Christian worship, leadership development, community involvement and youth fellowship."

Past performances have included the Africa in April Cultural Festival, The Les Gemmes Sweetheart Breakfast, LeMoyne-Owen NAACP activities, Goldsmith's-Macy's Shop for a Cause and the City-Wide Baptist Ministers and Deacons Wives Fashion Show, among other events.



Praise Dance Showcase winners are (from left) Rochelle Hodges, Alexandria Moore, coordinator Andrea Dandridge, Kameshia Jones, Christen Scott, Dominique Hollingshed, Kiara Kelley, Britney Drake and Lesley Hodges.

Most recently, the group was featured at the Tennessee BM&E State Congress Youth Rally.

As coordinator, Dandridge, who was choreographer of the Tennessee BM&E State Congress dance presentation for the past two years, choreographs the dances and facilitates the Christian workshops that keep the group in line with their true purpose.

The second- and third-place winners were Cummings Street Baptist Church and Mt. Olive No. 2 Baptist Church, respectively. Other participating churches include New Salem Baptist, St. John Baptist, Washington Chapel AME, Greater Abyssinia and two groups from El-Shaddai Baptist Church.

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