



ABOVE: The Casali dance team performs a kickline at a holiday show last year. "We have started our rehearsals. There were a couple full-day five-hour rehearsals in August and September to learn the dances," junior Maggie McEnroe said. "Also, throughout the week, if we need it, like before big shows, we usually end up having rehearsals."



ABOVE: "Over the years, I've spent so much time at Casali that I consider it my extended family," Casali dance teacher Melissa Hillmer said. "I may not have children of my own, but I call my students my kids because they become such a huge part of my life."

Casali dancers kick off holiday season

By Bella Lawson
STAFF REPORTER

Animals won't be the only thing entertaining children and their families at the Detroit Zoo Nov. 29. The Casali School of Dance's Holiday Dancers will be performing for the first time at the zoo's Wild Lights event. Dance teacher Anna Casali said she's excited for the team to perform.

"We love spreading holiday cheer through our dancing. The dancers are excited because more of their friends and families can attend," Casali said. "They will also be able to dance for all ages that will attend the event."

The zoo called the dancers a few weeks ago and opened up a new opportunity for them by inviting them to perform.

Junior Maggie McEnroe, a dancer for Casali's Holiday Dancers, believes this is an accomplishment for the whole team.

"The team that we are on is basically a nonprofit for just dancing at different nursing homes and bringing a lot of cheer to their holidays because a lot of people don't have anyone that comes to see them

at all," McEnroe said. "It's just kind of a big deal that we have our entire team being invited to perform at the zoo."

The holiday team is accustomed to performing at nursing homes, visiting and cheering up those without family on holidays. They began the annual tradition in 1997.

"Seeing people's reactions to it and being happy that we're here dancing for them—it's just really nice to feel that way," junior Beth Montagne said.

Casali dance teacher Melissa Hillmer is proud to be dancing at the Detroit Zoo.

"I believe every performance is an achievement, and I feel so honored that the Detroit Zoo has asked us to perform there. This is one of the biggest achievements in my entire dance career," Hillmer said. "I can only think of two other events that were more important: in 2000, we were asked to perform a competition dance at the Galaxy Theater in Disney World, and in 2014, we danced for Rita Moreno at a West Side Story anniversary special at the Redford Theatre."

Practicing for their holiday shows since September, the team had an intense three-day workshop and then rehearsed three hours weekly in preparation for

this event. McEnroe considers working with these girls and teachers as a reward.

"It's not an audition team, but it's more of a 'when our teacher thinks that we understand the importance of being on this team and understanding how great it is to be able to go to these nursing homes and dance at Toys for Tots and at Redford Theatre.' So, you have to be at a maturity level where she asks you to be on the team," McEnroe said. "You can't just 'be' on the team one year. She has to ask you to join."

This opportunity reflects what dance means to Hillmer.

"Dance means the world to me ... I may not be the best dancer, but I love it with every fiber of my being. Dance is in my heart and my soul—it is my passion, and I'd be lost without it. Dance is everything. Dance has taught me discipline, respect and open-mindedness," Hillmer said. "It helped mold me into a strong, independent woman with a professional, determined work ethic."

Contributing Tommy Teftsis & Caitlin Bush



JEFFREY GIRBACH



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Senior gymnast swings back following injury

By Billy Moin & Sonny Mulpuri
EDITOR & INTERN

As the beginning of competition season approaches, senior Ethan Campion is gearing up for another year of gymnastics.

Campion proved to gain some success over the years. He qualified for junior Olympics, which are run by USA Men's Gymnastics, for four years in a row. After missing the end of his last season because of a shoulder injury, Campion's goal is to make the competition cut one more time before he graduates.

Campion started gymnastics when he was 3 years old and is now in his eleventh competitive season. His mother, Elizabeth Campion, was the one who originally encouraged Ethan to become involved in the sport.

"When he was little, he was always climbing on things, and he started doing flips on my bed," Elizabeth said. "I was worried about him being safe ... so I took him to a gym to start doing classes."

For male gymnasts, there are six different events to compete in, including floor exercise, pommel horse, still rings, vault, parallel bars and horizontal bar. Competitors perform their routines and are given points based on the difficulty and how well they execute it. Whoever scores the most points wins.

Through gymnastics, Ethan has gained the ability to focus on things outside of the sport.

"It's really made him the person he is ... when he was younger, it was hard for him to focus (in school), and it was hard for him to sit still," Elizabeth said. "Gymnastics has always been a thing he has been able to focus on."

Over time, Ethan grew to enjoy the sport and has stuck with it since then. However, despite having 10 years of experience competing, Ethan still gets nervous before an event.

"It's kind of nerve wracking, and there a lot of emotions," Ethan said. "It's pretty scary, but it's still fun."

Ethan says the sport has made him stronger, helped him learn how to deal with other people and provided opportunities to travel. However, gymnastics became time-consuming.

It doesn't help that his practices are 45 minutes away. Ethan competes for the Olympia Gymnastics Academy, located in Shelby Township. While there are closer gyms he could go to, Ethan goes to Olympia for the coach.

According to Elizabeth, Ethan used to be on All World Gymnastics, but when the coach, Brandan Ulewicz, moved to Olympia, Ethan followed.

"The coach pushes him to succeed without being mean like some coaches out there," Elizabeth said. "His coach isn't like that. He really encourages the kids, but he can be a lot of fun, too."

However, just because Ulewicz uses a more positive coaching style doesn't mean Ethan takes gymnastics lightly.

Ulewicz says that Ethan is extremely serious, focuses on what needs to be done and doesn't back down from challenges. Ulewicz believes this is what has allowed Ethan to succeed in a sport where being timid and losing focus will hold people back.

Ethan's attitude has helped shape the team. Sal Izzi, a senior at L'Anse Creuse High School, says that Ethan pushes everyone to improve and has made the team better.

According to Ethan, the team motivates him just as much. "My biggest inspiration would have to be the guys I hang out with because we all strive to make each other better," Ethan said. "We challenge each other, and we have a good time with it."



JEFFREY GIRBACH

TOP LEFT: Senior Ethan Campion holds himself up on still rings.
TOP RIGHT: Campion performs traditional double leg work on a pommel horse.
ABOVE: Campion does a handstand on the parallel bars.