



## DANCING

has been an integral and important part of Kayla Pittner's life. It has taken the Sheboygan native all over the country and all over the world, including China and Russia. Pittner began dancing at age three, earned a WACPC Hip Hop State Championship in 2006 in high school and was a member of the Milwaukee Bucks Dancers for two years.

"Dancing for the Bucks was one of the most special and unique experiences of my life, thus far," Pittner said. "My favorite memory was when I was asked to travel to China with the organization for the NBA Summer Games, in 2008. It was my first time out of the United States, and to be able to experience such an amazing and beautiful place was an incredible opportunity."



Kayla Pittner (left) sought help from the SBDC to take a "very big step."

Following a varsity coaching stint at her high school alma mater, and then choreographing and teaching for studios and dance teams in Maryland, Chicago and Milwaukee, Pittner hung up her own shingle, opening Dollhouse Dance Factory in 2013 in Sheboygan. She knew there were many young people in the area that had interest in dance, but they had little-to-no opportunity to train at a competitive level.

As Pittner describes it, Dollhouse Dance Factory is "an oasis for young girls who love to dance" and resembles a life-size dollhouse. Clients come from a 60-mile radius, though most are from Sheboygan, Kohler and Howards Grove. The Recreational Program (250 students) allows beginning- to intermediate-level dancers ages 3-18 to train once per week. Meanwhile, the competitive program (122 students split among seven teams) is comprised of intermediate- to advanced-level dancers ages 7-25 who must audition to earn a spot. These dancers compete from December to May in 6-8 competitions throughout the country, and the top ones compete in The Dance Worlds held each year near Orlando, Fla.

After about two years, Pittner's ever-increasing client base was outgrowing its space. She decided she wanted to expand her facility from 3,000 square feet to 11,000 square feet, and she knew she needed help to take this "very big step." After learning about the SBDC through the Sheboygan County Economic Development Corporation, she began working with Business Counselor Chuck Brys of the SBDC at UW-Green Bay in March to get help in applying for the funding required for the expansion.

## DOLLHOUSE DANCE FACTORY

Accomplishments with the SBDC of UW-Green Bay:

- Developed business plan
- Created detailed loan application
- Expanded facility
- Hired staff

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- Kayla Pittner

The working relationship was seamless and stress-free, according to Pittner. In just four months, she developed a thorough business plan and created a detailed loan application, and in the end, Pittner received approval on her business development loan through the City of Sheboygan. Pittner said she also learned a lot about expanding her business and how to avoid potential issues down the road.

"Essentially, the expansion of my business may not have happened without the SBDC," Pittner said. "It meant everything to have the support and assistance in the exact time I truly needed it. It felt like I was effortlessly guided through the entire process."

Besides the expansion, the funds were used to hire more staff—Dollhouse Dance Factory now has nine, and Pittner continues to serve as artistic director. The larger space is accommodating her current needs, but at the rate her studio is growing ... well, at least Pittner knows where to go if she needs business assistance again.