

Erica's Dream Come True

Once upon a time, there was a girl who loved fairy tales very much, and while this girl did marry her handsome prince, in a castle, complete with ball gown and tiara, this is not that story. This is a story of her other love, her HEART'S TRUE DREAM.

Ever since I can remember, I always loved being around younger children. By 5th grade I was helping in my school's preschool, and often said I wanted to own a daycare center when asked, "What do you want to be when you grow up." Throughout my high school and college years, I volunteered in my church nursery and children's programs. Later, I saw a special on orphans in Romania and knew I would someday go to help in whatever way I could. In my twenties, I volunteered on humanitarian trips to Romania and Russia to build a playground and bring Christmas presents to orphans in these countries.

As I got older I had many jobs, including running a personal development company, called Life Tigers. It was while working for Life Tigers that I started to really search my inner self and find out what was my passion, what brought me the most joy. At one of the seminars I had a very specific dream, about a place full of wonder and imagination, filled with books and a tree to read them under, toys and most of all Joyful children. The next day I wrote down as many details about this place as I could remember. I knew then someday this dream would be my reality.

Years later as I sat under a tree in my backyard having just left working at Build a Bear, I pondered what to do next with my life. What would truly bring me joy? Working with children of course! I decide to put my application online and look for a job as a nanny. I was very lucky to find the most wonderful family. We had so many things in common, including the fact they had adopted two amazing girls from China, just as I hope to someday. My interview and first meeting took place at Joyful Music and Dance Studios, and I was instantly in love. Not only did this wonderful place provide a place for all children to experience music, but it also supported this family's charity, helping orphans in China. I got the job and it wasn't long before I began helping out at JMDS as well.

After a few months, this family explained that they were ready to open a new chapter in their lives and generously asked if I would consider becoming the owner of JMDS. I could hardly believe my DREAM was truly becoming my REALITY. As the company transitioned, I knew it would not be complete without dance. My best friend of more than 10 years was a dance teacher and I always enjoyed attending her recitals, and dance trips and couldn't wait to bring that joy to JMDS. This last year, I am happy to say that my friend Heather has come back to Florida and has brought tap, jazz, hip hop, and musical theatre to JMDS.

I am so grateful to be able to live out my Heart's Wish, doing what I love most. Every day I am overwhelmed with JOY to get the opportunity to share music, art and dance with our many families! I think Disney had it right with the following lyrics: "A dream is a wish your heart makes", and I truly believe, "When you wish upon a star, makes no difference who you are, anything your heart desires will come to you." Thank you for being a part of my dream come true! - With all my LOVE, Miss Erica