

Joyful Beginnings – Kim Dixon

Not long ago I was asked to tell the story of Orphans Song, Joyful Music & Dance and Joyful Music & Pediatric Therapy and explain how the pieces fit together.

I will begin by going back 25 years, to the time when I was a new mother and my oldest was in Kindergarten. I have vivid memories of the day that my son's Kindergarten teacher told me that she felt he had Attention Deficit Disorder and I needed to have him tested. I can still feel the knot in my stomach when I heard those words. I didn't know what ADD was, but I was determined to do all that I could for my son.

Twenty-five years ago learning differences were fairly new on the radar screen, and there weren't many resources available. I struggled to find the right school and locations for pediatric therapy. How I wished there had been a fun and happy place to go; a place where my son could receive the help that he needed. I tried desperately to find classes that he could be enrolled in and mainstreamed into, classes that he would enjoy and feel successful in. (I will pause here to tell you that my son is grown up now. He is married and completing his college work for his Physical Therapy Assistant degree.)

Now you understand the Joyful Music & Pediatric Therapy piece of the puzzle.

Now I will jump ahead to 2006 when my husband and I traveled to China to adopt our youngest daughter. Both of us were deeply touched by the Chinese people and the many little girls that lived in orphanages waiting for a home that they could call their own. I realized that as much as I wanted to, I could not adopt all of the children and bring them home. It was because of my deep love for all children, but in particular orphaned children, that I and my dear friend, Martha Murray, started the Orphans Song Foundation. (You may find out more about the Orphans Song Foundation by visiting www.orphanssong.org)

Now you understand the Orphans Song piece of the puzzle.

When we brought our youngest daughter home from China, I looked for activities that we could do together. Because my oldest daughter had gone to Kindermusik, I wanted to do the same for my new little girl. After an internet search, I found a Kindermusik program in Lake Mary. We signed up for classes immediately. Karly and I had SO MUCH fun singing and dancing to the very songs that you enjoy now. After a fun year of Kindermusik, Ms. Wilson told us that she was moving away. I tried to find other Kindermusik programs, but the closest one was 25 minutes away. I knew the importance of music in the lives of children. I knew that music had to be part of, not only my own children's lives, but also the lives of the children in our community. That was when I decided that I would become a licensed Kindermusik Educator and open a music studio in Lake Mary.

Now that you understand the last piece of the puzzle, let me put the pieces together for you.

The Joyful Music and Dance Studios, business entity, was structured in a way that not only allowed families to donate to the Orphans Song Foundation directly (it is a 501c3) but also allowed the profits of the studio to fund the Orphans Song Foundation. (The money from the coffee and snack donations, the crafts that you can make in the waiting room, as well as the train bank, all go to the Orphans Song Foundation.)

I wanted Joyful Music and Dance Studios to be a happy place for all families in our community, those with typical children and those with children with learning differences, and so I began the search for someone who was not only musical but who understood how to reach children with special needs. That is how Tamela Ponder, a Board Certified Music Therapist came to JMDS to be my business partner.

With the help of her vision for Joyful Music, we moved forward with the opening of Joyful Music & Pediatric Therapy, during the spring of 2010. JMPT was created to provide music therapy to children with autism, sensory processing issues and other developmental delays. The JMPT area was created so that parents could come to a happy and relaxing environment while their children were receiving therapy.

Now you can understand the entire picture. It was through my love for music that Joyful Music and Dance Studios began; and it was through my love for orphans, that Orphans Song began; and it was through my desire that all families with children with learning differences have a happy place to come for music and therapy; that Joyful Music and Pediatric Therapy began.

I hope that you and your family will receive a blessing each time you bring your children to this studio. Thank you for being part of this musical family!

In the summer of 2011 Ms. Kim opened up a new chapter in her life and sold Joyful Music and Dance Studios to Erica Riles and Tamela Ponder. Miss Tamela, co-founder and music therapist, took over the Joyful Music and Pediatric Therapy which is now Joyful Music Therapy and Miss Erica who had been working for Joyful Music since 2010 took over Joyful Music and Dance Studios as you know it today. She moved the studio to our new larger space and added dance to the mix. Miss Erica has a true passion for children and is a perfect fit to carry on the dream Kim started. You can read Miss Erica's story under her profile to see how she has added to the Joyful Music and Dance Studios!