

“WE ARE SO GRATEFUL”

Amy Stensberg, Parent

From the red dirt of southern Ethiopia, Sophie traveled above the clouds to her new world. That flight symbolized so many changes, and her time at Above the Clouds continues to be a place for change.

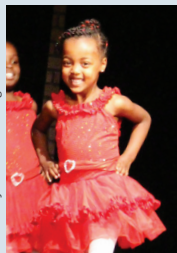


Photo by Jennifer Dreger

Sophie has gone from a physically limited toddler to an agile, graceful little girl who loves pirouette-ing and chassé-ing through the house – and through life! We are so grateful for the ever-patient and talented Miss Lindsay and Miss Kim for their methodical instruction.

Sophie has also grown spiritually. From Miss Kim’s example and encouragement, Sophie has learned to pray for her peers and to bless others: “May the BLESSING of the Lord be with you all through the week!” How wonderful it is to have other Godly influences in our child’s life; there can never be enough! And in the world of the Arts, that influence is so rare. Thanks be to God!

We, as a family, are grateful to Above the Clouds for the beautifully diverse environment it creates, which challenges the destructive norms of segregation we confront almost constantly in this city. From the rainbow of skin colors in weekly ballet class, to the joy of sitting in the most racially mixed section of the theater during “The Nutcracker,” we are so happy to be a part of a positive example of the unity of God’s people.

In short, Above the Clouds has afforded so much positive change in Sophie’s life... and she’s only been involved for two years. We look forward to the future!



Christmas at the Lutheran Home

Our level 1-4 ballet students shared Christmas at the Lutheran Home. They danced, handed out stuffed animals to residents and staff, gave them Christmas cards they had made, and taught them a song. The students were led by ATC instructors Kim Brunner and Julia Lagina. Thanks to one of our grandparents who purchased the stuffed animals.



Our level 6-7 ballet students did an opening piece at a Christmas opera called “Amahal and the Night Visitors.” A special thank you to ATC Board President Diane Stewart for putting it on. All proceeds went to Above The Clouds.

Watch a video of the opening piece: <http://bit.ly/2jka8Fr>

10 more students will receive scholarships to attend First Stage Children’s Theater winter or spring sessions. Thank you First Stage Theater for your partnership with Above The Clouds.!

THE ATC MISSION: To expose children ages 5-17 to the creative arts/movement – free of charge – in a safe and loving atmosphere, in order to expand their minds for appreciation of the arts, for personal enhancements and the possibility of pursuing a career in the arts while instilling biblical truths.

“For as the heavens are higher than the earth so are my ways higher than your ways...” Isaiah 55:9

AT THE BALLET

Some ATC ballet students and instructors Julia and Lindsey attended the ballet “Assemble” thanks to Alyson from the Milwaukee Ballet. In December 100 ATC ballet students and family members attended the ballet “The Nutcracker.”



Assemble



Assemble



The Nutcracker



The Nutcracker



The Nutcracker

IN THE NEWS



Above the Clouds is one of the nonprofits in the city to have completed the **Sustainability and Impact Project** sponsored by Bader Philanthropies, Midwest Social Innovation, Innovative Learning Strategies, and Wisconsin Philanthropy Network. Joining

ATC Founder **Linda Wade** (center) were ATC board member **Georgine Wenzler-Johnson** (left) and ATC co-founder **Barbara Melsheimer**.



In November, the Milwaukee Neighborhood News Service published a story about ATC Founder **Linda Wade**. See the article by Emily Dever and watch the video at <http://bit.ly/2jlmXiz>.

Excerpts from the interview:

Why did you start a nonprofit as opposed to a for-profit business?

Wade: I wanted to focus on the children and families in our community. Being a nonprofit really encourages us to stay on our mission. I wanted to keep the classes free for the kids who wouldn't have this opportunity otherwise. Most of our children are from inner city Milwaukee and can't afford classes – African American, Hispanic; we have about 5 percent Caucasian and Asian, too. We wanted to give them all an opportunity to study art.

Can you tell us more about the rewards?

Wade: With all the unrest in the Milwaukee area, it's rewarding that our teachers and students get to mingle with people that are not from where they are and do not look like them... They're able to see that everybody is the same, and they can build friendships. That's just as rewarding as seeing families coming together from different areas of the city, finding out about each other and helping each other.

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