



Cathy Patterson

## THE APPROACH

After she simultaneously whips her left arm across her body and plants her left foot, Cathy Patterson shifts her weight back, powers off her right foot, raises on her left foot and swings her right leg and arm forcefully, gracefully high in the air. The right side of her body smoothly melts toward the ground before she finishes with a sharp shoulder pop. Four flawless seconds later, she moves out of the choreography as casually and naturally as she stepped into it.

“I just love that it’s an art that’s also physical,” says Patterson, owner/dancer/instructor at Point B Dance. “I think people love dance because it’s so physical and so expressive.”

Like many dance studios, Point B Dance instructs children through classes offered by Deena Schaumburg. But the studio is fairly rare in concentrating on adult courses—and that presents an inherent challenge. Whereas children generally start at the novice level and work upward, adults looking for dance classes might have years of instruction—or none—behind them.

Patterson, working with assistant director Carly Malsom and seven instructors, devised a range of courses for all levels. One class, for example, is strictly for fitness. Some classes follow a four-week progressive pattern where students build upon the choreography they learn the first class. Beginning classes provide novice dancers the opportunity to get their shuffling feet wet, while the technique classes provide an opportunity for more experienced students to sharpen their skills.

At the first levels, the point is anything but perfection. “When you come in here and you’re dancing, you don’t think about anything else,” says Patterson. “It’s the same with exercise. My goal is for them to have a place where they can just for an hour feel like they don’t have to worry about anything.”

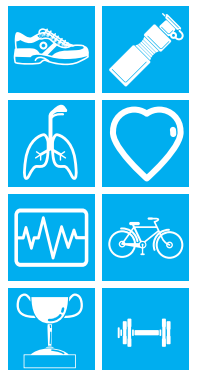
## THE RANGE

Kim Lybarger, a stay-at-home mom and Point B client, had no formal training when she started at Point B two years ago.

# LM FIT

## DANCE STEPS

Lawrence studio provides instruction for adults at range of levels





“There’s all these lovely, young dancers who are technically skilled and inspiring,” says Lybarger. “I was just bumbling along. I’m still sort of in that space where every time I go I bumble through a little bit better than the last time.”

Patterson recommends taking two or three rounds of the four-week beginning courses before jumping into an open class, but that fusion of experienced and new talent on the same floor is exactly what Patterson says she is trying to achieve in particular classes.

“In our open classes, we have all ranges of abilities,” says Patterson. “We have people who have danced on cruise ships or music videos to people who have not danced very much.”

Michelle Stewart, a litigation attorney and Point B client, is part of that mix. She danced for nearly 20 years and spent much of her childhood at the Dance Factory in Topeka—alongside Patterson. After a 12-year layoff, she’s now been back on the floor for a year.

Stewart and Lybarger both have comfortably found a niche and encourage others to give it a try.

“It’s not about how high you can kick your leg or how many turns you can do,” says Stewart. “It’s that you’re there. You’re dancing. You’re doing the movements.”

“Everybody’s so encouraging,” Lybarger says. “You can totally mess up and not one person cares. Even if you went and flubbed up, and you were the worst dancer ever, you would probably have a really great time. Personally, I find myself giddy after class. You just go, and you have a ball.”

### THE PRO-ALTERNATIVE

The triple threat of dance—technicality, musicality, showmanship—Patterson seeks each quality when forming her AIM Dance Company, which is mostly made up of college-aged, experienced dancers. This past spring, the company consisted of 22 females and four males, ranging in age from 16 to 32. The studio holds auditions at the beginning of each semester. Once chosen, dancers rehearse and train rigorously for the final show, which has a concert dance emphasis in the fall and a commercial dance focus in the spring.

“They have to be advanced in something,” says Patterson. “We have people who are stronger in hip hop and people stronger in jazz and people stronger in contemporary, and we try to highlight all of that in our shows.”

In the future, Patterson would like to offer a formal program to college students who want to continue their dance careers following childhood and high school while earning a college degree. Most dancers are forced to choose between pursuing their dance careers in New York or L.A. and learning a more practical trade in college.

“The college-aged dancers could do a four-year training program,” says Patterson. “Then, when they graduate, they have choices. They can do what they’ve trained to do, or they can try to dance, and they’re not way behind in dance. It’s a compromise.” **LM**



Michelle Stewart

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