



Amherst Bee

GUIDE TO YOUR COMMUNITY

The **Amherst Community Guide** is the most up to date and comprehensive information contained in a popular and easy to reference booklet, published every year by **The Bee Group Newspapers**.

Use this opportunity to market your business all year long to the loyal readers of **The Amherst Bee**, as they will keep our Amherst Community Guide on hand to look up things to do, restaurant listings and local government names and numbers. It will be chock full of listings, addresses and phone numbers for government, social, recreational clubs and activities, and will also contain history, attractions, and future community dates and events.

Don't miss the chance to showcase your business in **The Amherst Community Guide**. It's the place to "Bee" seen!

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Deadline:

Friday, April 4th

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Bee Group Newspapers publishes Community Guides within our nine Bee Newspapers. Discounted rates are available for advertising in three or more Community Guides. *(See your representative for dates, rates and deadlines.)*
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Amherst Bee

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BEE INCLUDED...

The **Amherst Bee's "Community Guide"** will be distributed in the April 23rd edition of The Amherst Bee. Designed to be a reference for both homeowners and the business community, the Community Guide will include map, listings, addresses and telephone numbers for government offices, service clubs and other community groups.

In order to ensure that your organization is included in the 2008 Community Guide, fill out the form below or use the Web form located at

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Look for the icon "Community Guide Information Form" on our home page.



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CONTACT NAME: _____

NAME OF ORGANIZATION/EVENT: _____

ADDRESS: _____

TOWN: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____

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Deadline for submissions: April 1, 2008

SOMEONE YOU SHOULD KNOW

Director shares passion for dance

by ANDREA KIMBRIEL

Maris Battaglia once taught dance lessons in her mother's basement. She is now the director of the American Academy of Ballet, a facility with 600 students.

Battaglia has been teaching dance in the area for 43 years. She founded the American Academy of Ballet, located at 491 West Klein Road, Williamsville, in 1965 after moving back to the area following her education in New York City.



Maris Battaglia

Younger siblings of the students in her small basement dance school asked her to teach them.

"That's part of the way it started," she said.

More than 75 of Battaglia's former students have danced professionally.

"Artistically it's rewarding when you have students who go on to develop a professional career," said Battaglia, who enjoys staying in touch with those she teaches — even 40 years later.

Students with professional careers are not the only ones who stand out in Battaglia's memory. She also taught inner city children and handicapped children, some of whom were blind.

"Teaching the handicapped kids — that was the most rewarding thing," she said. Battaglia remembers seeing significant improvement in their physical abilities as the lessons progressed.

The Academy has also participated in an exchange program with the Riga Ballet School in Latvia, where Mikhail Baryshnikov, a superstar of the dance world, was trained. Battaglia taught in Latvia for several weeks, and children from that school traveled to the U.S. to study at the American Academy of Ballet.

A major benefit of the exchange program was to have her students "see how lucky they were — to see what they had," she said. The students from Latvia had only one pair of pointe shoes and limited supplies, she said.

Battaglia teaches ballet, pointe and character classes at the Academy. She received her training at George Balanchine's School of American Ballet, the official school of the New York City Ballet Company. Battaglia has also been on the faculty of the Chautauqua Institute's summer dance program since 1989.

On Friday, she received an award as an outstanding arts supporter from the Arts Council in Buffalo & Erie County.

"She has facilitated the development of grace, poise, an awareness of the arts and the physical and mental discipline associated with the serious study of dance for thousands of young children during her career," according to information about her award on the Arts Council Web site, www.artscouncilbuffalo.org/2008-awards-luncheon-honorees.asp.

"It's nice to be recognized by your own community and by your peers, and that makes it very special," she said.

Battaglia said the area has many opportunities in the arts. "I think we have a great philharmonic, we have a great art gallery, we have some great theaters," she said.

Battaglia said it is unfortunate that Buffalo has never been able to fully support a ballet company of its own, although a number of people have tried to establish one.

Directing the Academy does not leave the East Amherst resident much time for other hobbies. However, she is able to relax during monthly visits to her husband in New York City where he lives for part of the year. She broke off her engagement to him when she returned to Western New York in the 1960s, but they became engaged again and were married in 1980, she said.

Although she enjoys visiting her husband as well as traveling to Italy each year, the studio is also a place of emotional release for her.

"When my mom died, I got through it because I was able to go to the studio and meet with the kids," she said.

If you have a suggestion for someone to feature in this column, send it to Jessica L. Finch, Amherst Bee, associate editor, P.O. Box 150, Buffalo, NY 14231-0150, or call 204-4917.

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