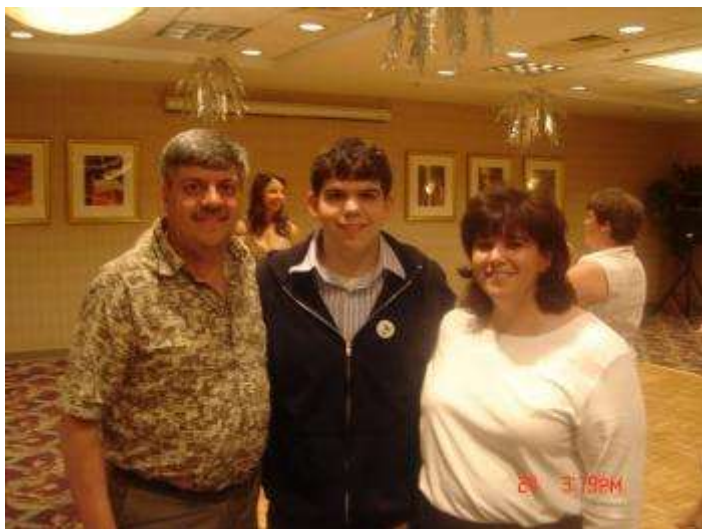


Teen is 'Mr. Dance of a New Generation'

By **Erica Thoits** - August 23, 2006



Jeff Poulin stepped on stage ready to dance for a panel of judges that included the choreographer for pop stars Christina Aguilera, Britney Spears and Justin Timberlake, a Radio City Rockette and a New York City college professor of dance.

Sixteen-year-old Poulin of Scarborough stepped off the stage with the title "Mr. Dance of a New Generation," and as the winner of the prestigious national competition put on by Dancers Inc., which was held late last month.

"It wasn't small cookies," said Dan Barris, one of the directors of the event that was held in Portland. "These people are the top of the industry."

Poulin is about to start his junior year at Scarborough High School and has been dancing since he was 2, the year he begged to tag along with his older sister to dance lessons.

Fourteen years ago he would do a half a day of dancing, eat lunch and fall asleep on the couch until it was time to go home. "That's how it all started, and I haven't really stopped since," said Poulin.

The competition is the first nationwide event hosted by Dancers Inc. It's more than a dance routine, said Barris. Contestants are required to enter an essay on how dance has affected their lives and how they feel it will impact their future. They must also take classes with the judges up until the final event, moving on only if they do well throughout the five days of practice.

"We chose to make it a little more difficult for them," said Barris. "This wasn't Jeff just getting up and doing a three minute routine. He really had his work cut out for him."

Barris is originally from Portland, and said bringing the competition to his home city was very personal for him.

"It was a really nice way to end the season," said Barris.

Poulin's title was the last to be called and none of the contestants could hear when the winner was announced.

"All of a sudden I heard applauding, and the four guys were all looking at each other, wondering who it was," said Poulin. After the confusion, he said the feeling of winning was amazing.

"It was so huge," he said. "It was a big confidence boost."

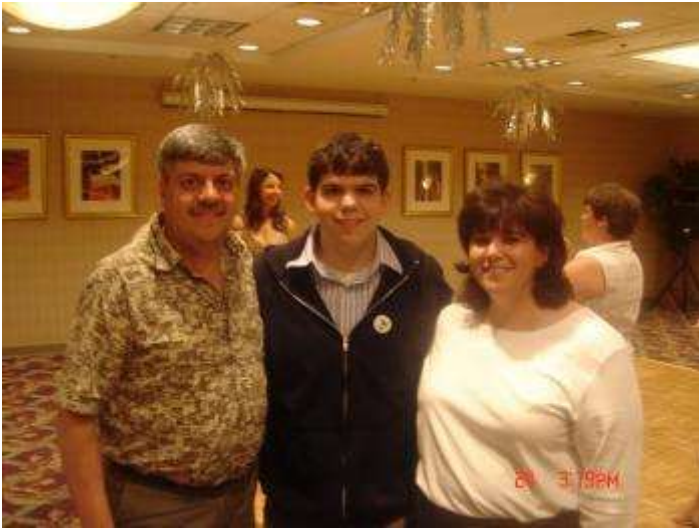
"He has worked so hard to get where he is," said Poulin's mother Donna Poulin. "I was so incredibly proud."

She added that unlike many competitions, the essay portion of the Dancers Inc. contest helps create well rounded kids, something she said will help her son succeed.

Poulin is doing his best to stay involved in many things at school and out of it, including joining the student council as president and acting in school plays and at Lyric Theater in South Portland.

Though he loves all of his activities, he said that it's dance he devotes the most attention to.

"My sport, per se, is dance," said Poulin. "It takes up all my time."



Jeff Poulin, middle, recently won the title "Mr. Dance of a new Generation." His parents, Marc and Donna Poulin, were there to cheer him on.



Jeff Poulin stands with one of the Dancers, Inc. directors Dan Barris after winning the competition.

Erica Thoits

<http://www.keepmecurrent.com>