



Longtime New York City Ballet principal dancer Wendy Whelan demonstrates a dance pose. She will teach an upcoming class in East Lyme.

Biggest names in dance to lead classes at ECB

By Lisa Reisman

EAST LYME — Count Mikhail Baryshnikov among the admirers of acclaimed dancer Wendy Whelan, who's making a rare appearance on the Shoreline to train the latest generation of aspiring prima ballerinas.

"She's the best," the ballet superstar told the New York Times, when asked to describe the longtime New York City Ballet principal dancer.

Whelan, recently appointed as the NYCB associate artistic director, is among a host of bold-faced names slated to lead master classes at Eastern Connecticut Ballet's summer intensive, "In Balanchine's Footsteps," at the East Lyme studio in two sessions, beginning on July 29.

Joining Whelan will be NYCB principal dancer Adrian Danchig-Waring,

praised in 2018 for a "new-found brilliance" by Times' dance critic Gia Kourlas.

He's "hit fresh heights in leading roles," as the Wall Street Journal put it, "not only in solo moments that revealed athletic prowess and nobility, but while supporting his three attendant muses with spontaneity and keen musical timing."

Celebrated Broadway dancer Mary Ann Lamb, whose credits include "Fosse," "Chicago" and "A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum," brings teaching chops that saw her working with Michelle Williams and Sam Rockwell on the current FX series "Fosse/Verdon."

Then there's Gloria Govrin, ECB's artistic director, and formerly a ballet luminary under the legendary choreographer and NYCB founder George Balanchine, with her "instinctive



Kyle Froman / Contributed photo

Wendy Whelan, widely considered one of the world's foremost dancers, will lead classes at East Lyme's Eastern Connecticut Ballet in two sessions starting July 29.

understanding of how to draw the best out of her students," as ECB executive director Lise Reardon put it.

The sessions offer a contrast to the hotly competitive NYC School of American Ballet summer intensive, where spots are highly coveted, according to Reardon, a former dancer.

"It's New York City-level training in a sleepy coastal town," she said. "It's also a singular opportunity for students of dance to immerse themselves in a range of areas from ballet technique, pointe, and variations, to discussions on topics like point shoes, to jazz and musical theater."

Not to mention, crucially, in the Balanchine method.

"There's no better way for a young dancer to learn than from master teachers who were either students of Balanchine, or members of companies that embrace his style and choreography," she said.

Whelan, who's making her debut as a faculty member at EBC, had another take.

"Intensive summer dance programs are part of the necessary building blocks to finding a career in dance," she said. "Training with new teachers who are introducing new ideas and new dance forms is a way to take your artistry to a new level."

For more information

on the "In Balanchine's Footsteps" summer intensive, contact ECB at 860-739-7899 or visit east-

ernctballet.org. Eastern Connecticut Ballet is on 435 Boston Post Road in East Lyme.



Lisa Reisman / For Hearst Connecticut Media

CDR volunteer coordinator Tabitha Brown is heading up the School Supply Collective Drive. 8/2/19

CDR to distribute free school-supply backpacks Aug. 20

By Lisa Reisman

BRANFORD — As the weeks dwindle to the first day of school, it's no secret that gearing kids up with the supplies they need to succeed can be a pricey proposition for some families.

Once again, the Community Dining Room is asking Branford individuals, businesses, and organizations to donate brand-new backpacks and school supplies (listed below) as part of CDR's annual School Supply Collection Drive.

Supplies may be dropped off at the CDR, Branford Town Hall, and Blackstone Memorial Library through Aug. 17. The CDR will be distributing backpacks filled with all the essentials to pre-registered students on Aug. 20 during its Tuesday night dinner on the Branford Green. The first day of school in Branford is on

“This initiative follows our mission,” CDR Volunteer Coordinator Tabitha Brown said. “CDR is more than just a meal. There's no reason that kids shouldn't have what they need to start the school year. They're our future.”

Last year, thanks to the generosity of “so many,” Brown said, CDR provided over 140 students in Branford with backpacks chock-full of notebooks, pencil boxes, calculators, binders and other essential supplies.

The number of requests for backpacks is expected to rise this year, she said.

The items needed to fill the backpacks include lunch bags, pencils and pens, 1-, 2- and 3-inch binders, folders, composition notebooks, three- and five-subject notebooks, markers/crayons/colored pencils, glue and gluesticks, highlighters, loose leaf paper, pencil boxes and pencil pouches, rulers, kid scissors, erasers, and calculators.

➔ To pre-register, parents or guardians should sign up in advance with valid identification to verify residency in Branford at CDR, 30 Harrison Ave. CDR is open seven days a week from 9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. ➔ For more information on the backpack program, contact Tabitha Brown at 203-488-9750 (ext. 2) or email volunteercoordinator@communitydinnin-groom.org.

BRANFORD

Closer to Free fundraiser at In Shape slated for early August



Contributed photo

In Shape trainers Patti Ferraro and Leighton Davis

7/26/19

Branford's Leighton Davis and Patti Ferraro will be among four trainers leading a room of spinners at Branford's In Shape Fitness Sunday

Aug. 4 to raise money for the Closer to Free Ride to benefit Smilow Cancer Hospital at Yale-New Haven. The ride will take place on Saturday, Sept. 7.

All of the funds raised go to research and patient care at Smilow, according to event organizer Katie

Bimonte, a 23-year cancer survivor, and leader of Team B.

The fundraiser is from 8 to 10 a.m. Reserve a bike, \$25, for 30-minute, one-hour or two-hour increments. To participate, call 203-481-0774 or sign up at In Shape, 89 N. Main St., Branford. Members have priority on bikes.

"Let's kick cancer to the curb," Bimonte said.

— Lisa Reisman