

Memory of dance teacher kept alive

Teen inspired younger students

By: **Sandy Klownik**

Posted: 01/20/2011 1:00 AM | [Comments: 2](#)



RUTH.BONNEVILLE@FREEPRESS.MB.CA [Enlarge Image](#)

Anita Subramaniam holds a portrait of her younger sister, Amutha, in a traditional southern India dance pose.

It was her smile, her laugh, her passion and dedication that friends and family will remember most about Amutha Subramaniam. Now, a dance scholarship will help keep alive the memory of the energetic teen whose life was cut short in a accident on Oct. 31 with a driver who was allegedly drunk.

The scholarship fund at the India School of Dance, Music & Theatre was set up just days after Amutha's death.

Friends and family wanted a place to donate in her memory, and felt a fund at the dance school she and

her sister so loved would be the perfect tribute.

"One of the biggest things my sister did was dance all her life at this school," said sister Anita, 25.

Both sisters went through the gruelling seven to nine year traditional Indian dance program, which requires at least 4-5 practice sessions a week.

As a very little girl, Amutha would eagerly watch her older sister dance, said the school's executive director Pam Rebello. And though most students start at five or six, she began her training at 4.

"She was one of those dancers that showed us in her eyes that she was ready," she said. "You could see it in her eyes, all her excitement for dance."

She was a gifted and expressive dancer able to portray emotion effectively through her face and body--an essential component to the traditional dance style, said Rebello. "She had the most beautiful smile."

After graduating from the program, Amutha moved on to teaching dance to young students, something she seemed born to do.

"She made dance interesting for the students" by using games to keep them energized, Rebello said. "She had the younger students with her and they all loved her."

Twelve-year-old Melanie William was a former student of Amutha's and considered her a friend and mentor.

"She's the funniest person you could meet in your life," said William. "She understood how hard it was to be a dancer."

"I always looked up to her," William said. "Lots of people including me will miss her a lot."

Rebello said the scholarship money, which currently totals roughly \$5,000, will be awarded yearly to "a young dance teacher that shows some of the qualities that Amutha exhibited in her short lifetime."

The money will pay teachers to do special summertime projects for the school, such as translating dance vocabulary from the traditional language to make a glossary.

Rebello hopes the scholarship will help continue to connect the new generation to traditional dance, as Amutha did so well with her teaching. But she said a worthy yearly recipient may be too much to expect--those matching Amutha's talent and dedication may not come around that often.

Anita hopes the scholarship will be a tangible way for people to understand and remember Amutha's gifts.

"She was all about unity. She was always about involving one another, Everyone would unite when she was around. That's a big part of who she is."

To donate to the scholarship, contact Pam Rebello at 256-7812 or indiasch@mts.net.

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