

MOLLY FROST
ST. VINCENT FERRER

Have you ever belonged to an organization or group that you felt so strongly about that you couldn't even describe it in words? This kind of group makes you smile and warms your heart when you think about the happiness it brings to people. Well, even at the age of fourteen, I can say that, "Yes", I have done something that fits that very description.

When I was three, my mother enrolled me in dance classes at The Connie Ferguson School of Dance. I practically grew up there and as I got older I wanted to do something more with the gifts that God had given me. Not long after, my dance teacher came to some girls that were in my classes and asked us if we were interested in and willing to help her with another class that she was going to teach. As she explained, she said that the class would be for children who had special needs and disabilities such as premature birth, autism, Down syndrome, and some physical disabilities. It didn't take me any longer than a few seconds to tell her with a resounding "yes" that I was interested in the charity. It was just what I was looking for and I thought that the parents and families, not to mention the children, would be grateful for my help.

On the first class, I arrived a little early to have some time to get ready. Soon the families and children began to file in on the wood floor, and as they looked around the sky blue room, I could see the parents eyes fill with tears because they knew that their children would be experiencing something that might have been restricted to girls without special needs. It was such a wonderful experience to know that just by doing something that I loved I could bring such happiness and fulfillment to someone's life.

As Mrs. Connie introduced herself to the four or five girls, I walked around to the back of class to see what kind of disabilities the girls had and how I could help them best. One girl, Hannah, had gotten too much oxygen when she was in her mother's womb and even though she was physically seven, her mental capacity was that of a two year old. Two other girls, Tara and Lizzie, were affected by Down syndrome, which meant that their muscles were very fragile and flexible so we had to be very careful not to hurt them. Other girls like Jennifer and Maria were disabled because of autism or a physical disability such as having to have braces on their legs.

After the introductions, we started with a little ballet and I worked my way down the barre helping the girls' posture and arm and leg positions.

The perseverance, hard work, and dedication that these girls showed to me were astounding. Just seeing their smiling faces light up every time they walked through the front door of the studio was truly inspiration for me. I don't think I would be as caring and in tune to how people are feeling if those girls had never been a part of my life. It is all I can hope that I have touched their lives and the lives of their families as much as they have touched mine.