

Dance and dolls

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Saige had pink ribbons around her ankles instead of ballet slippers.

Her owner, Anna Gordon Gardner, decided it was too difficult to put on the American Girl doll's shoes.

But with a little imagination, the satin bows around the ankles had the same effect to the 7-year-old ballerina.

Anna Gordon was learning all about imagination at her American Girl dance camp at the Legacy Dance Project studio. The week-long camp was for children ages 5 through 7.

Anna Gordon attended the camp with her best friend, Charlotte Boyd.

"We've been friends since we were babies," she said.

The girls often speak as a chorus, each clamoring to talk at the same time.

Charlotte, 7, brought along Grace, her American Girl doll.

Both girls love making their dolls dance with them.

"I like to make her do splits in the air," Anna Gordon said.

Grace and Saige were placed lovingly against the mirror lined walls to serve as an audience as Charlotte and Anna Gordon showed off their dance skills.

And not to be neglected, both dolls were given handmade dance studios -- complete with tin foil mirrors out of cardboard boxes.

On Tuesday, the girls made new leotards for their dolls out of tube socks.

"Saige likes yellow, so mine is yellow," Anna Gordon said.

Grace's new leotard had a cat on the front.

Legacy Dance Project owner Megan Hoyle remembered her own love for American Girls as a child.

"I did, I loved her. I had the outfits and everything," she said.

She was inspired by the 2014 American Girl doll Isabelle, a spunky ballerina seen in the movie "Isabelle Dances into the Spotlight."

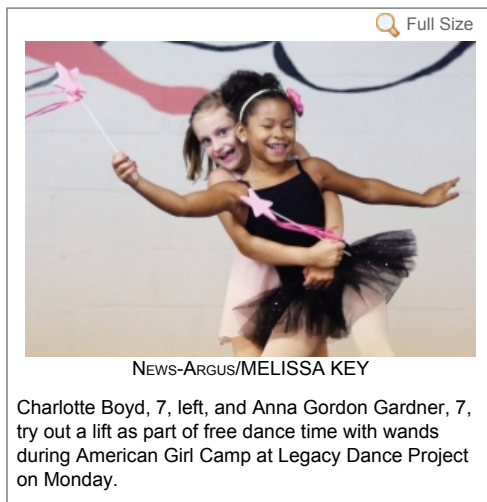
"Dance is becoming an every day subject in a little girl's world," she said.

The camp is a combination of dance techniques and play, to keep the children engaged and laughing.

"A lot of (American Girl) stuff gets so expensive, I wanted to show them we can make dance studios out of the stuff we have," she said. "I want them to be innovative and creative."

The girls color, have scavenger hunts and create imaginary worlds for their dolls.

They also learn ballet vocabulary and proper pirouette form.



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Charlotte Boyd, 7, left, and Anna Gordon Gardner, 7, try out a lift as part of free dance time with wands during American Girl Camp at Legacy Dance Project on Monday.

"I'm a big fan of learning," Megan said. "I asked them, if they had to write their own American Girl stories, what would make it special to them? I want a celebration of being unique."

She lays on the floor and designs leotards with the girls, discussing color choices and the other things of importance in the world of a 7-year-old.

"Our leotards need some bling," Megan announced, getting a box of jewels out to hot glue to the socks.

The studio opened in June. As Megan builds her business, she wants to build young dancers' confidence. Each choice or dance move made by the girls is complimented and praised.

As Charlotte demonstrated her pirouette, Megan stood behind her to help with spotting.

"Find those pretty eyes and smile in the mirror each time you turn," she said.

Megan has big plans for the rest of the year. In August she will host a hip hop camp and in the fall, she will start Legends Ballet, a free special needs dance camp one weekend a month.

"I want to do something different here," she said.

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