

## PRESS RELEASE

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### ROUND TRIP TO MOSCOW

#### A Memorial to Bellevue Dance Pioneer

**Bellevue, WA** - With a burst of inspiration and unmistakable achievement, four dance students from Ballet Bellevue School have just returned from their two-week adventure to Russia as winners of the first annual Carolyn Gracey Greer Memorial Scholarship Award.

The scholarship was established this year by Ballet Bellevue to honor the memory of the late Ms. Greer, founder of Ballet Arts Center at 204 100th Avenue N.E. The historic studio built by Ms. Greer in downtown Old Bellevue in 1966 has been home to Ballet Bellevue company and school since 1997.

Between two full days of air travel on Aeroflot Airlines and two all night train rides, a little sightseeing was squeezed in as future dance careers were forged during eight challenging days of dance study. Bryon Brill, 17, of Snohomish, Natasha Keeley, 16, of Monroe, Alexa Kovalik, 15, of Bothell, and Sarah Poppe, 15, of Lake Stevens were chosen for the honor of this award by Ballet Bellevue Artistic Director, Viktoria Titova, who is herself a former dancer with Moscow's Bolshoi Ballet Grigorovich Company. Ms. Titova, her husband Vasily Titov, and one parent, Anne Poppe, accompanied the students on this cultural exchange opportunity. "It was definitely very educational," said Anne Poppe. The four American students who had barely traveled before, spent some serious hours with the Russian alphabet and survival phrases as they planned their packing for a land where spring arrives late, arranged to miss two weeks of school and struck out together on a great adventure to the other side of the world. Ms. Titova was overjoyed that all of her expectations for the trip were not only met, but exceeded. "I just wanted them to see what it really means to prepare for a professional career," said Titova. After the grand privilege of studying in Moscow's Bolshoi Ballet Academy with Alexander Bandarenko, they traveled by train to Voronezh for long days of classes beginning at 7:30 AM with the hard-working students of Titova's own former teacher, Nabilia Valitova, Artistic Director of the Voronezh Ballet Academy. A going away party celebrated the goodbyes that are preserved in photos of the international set whose careers will no doubt one day bring them together again. With the unpacking of souvenirs and armfuls of new Russian-made point shoes, the stories are just beginning to unfold. Most surprising of all is the thrilling new level of strength and artistry now on display at Ballet Bellevue School.

As plans already refuse to be suppressed for going back next year, Ballet Bellevue's 2004 Summer Intensive Program July 5-August 1 will be the first opportunity for new applicants to be considered for the 2nd Annual Carolyn Gracey Greer Memorial Award

in Spring 2005. Students aspiring to a professional dance career are encouraged to apply for the 2004 Summer Intensive by contacting Ballet Bellevue at 425.455.1345 or visiting [www.balletbellevue.org](http://www.balletbellevue.org). Gifts to the memorial scholarship fund may be arranged by contacting Ballet Bellevue.