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NEWS RELEASE

QACPS DANCE PROGRAMS MAKE STATE HISTORY AT 36TH ANNUAL MARYLAND PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL DANCE SHOWCASE

KIHS Dancers (left to right): Farrah Wilde, Brooke Secrist, Nadia Wilde, McKenzie Meredith, Brynn Blejwas, Dylan Miller, Emily Dryer, Meghan Outten

TOWSON/QUEEN ANNE'S COUNTY, MD - Queen Anne's County Public Schools (QACPS) dance programs marked a historic moment on January 9, 2026, at the 36th Annual Maryland Public High School Dance Showcase at Goucher College, as **Kent Island High School (KIHS)** and **Queen Anne's County High School (QACHS)** were both selected through professional adjudication to perform in the evening Showcase Concert — a first for the district.

The event, held at Goucher College's Kraushaar Auditorium, culminated in a sold-out performance featuring top dance programs from across Maryland. Adding to the milestone, **Kent Island High School earned the Professionalism Award**, recognizing collaboration, respect, and professional conduct throughout the festival.

"This is an award I've wanted for nearly twenty years," said **Amber Wright**, KIHS Dance Instructor. "To finally see Kent Island dancers recognized for their training, dedication, and respect for this art form means everything. This honor reflects their professionalism and the trust they showed their choreographer, Nadia Wilde. I couldn't be prouder."

A Day Rooted in Inspiration

The day opened with a keynote from **Peter Pucci**, Executive Director of the **Carole Cascio Fund for Mind Movement Dance Connections (CCF)**, who shared how one teacher, *Carole Cascio,* changed the course of his life and inspired him to carry forward her legacy through the organization founded in her honor. Speaking to dance students from schools across Maryland, Pucci encouraged them to recognize the lasting influence educators can have and to see their own artistic paths as part of something larger.

Through Pucci's continued partnership with **Michael Bell**, Supervisor of Visual and Performing Arts for QACPS, Queen Anne's County students have benefited exponentially from expanded access to high-quality dance and innovative movement experiences across all grade levels — from visiting teaching artists and masterclasses to authentic performance opportunities like *Days of Dance* and statewide showcases.

While at Goucher, students spent the day immersed in professional learning, participating in masterclasses across 17 different dance styles, including Polynesian, Tap, Irish, Ballet, Modern, and Contemporary, before preparing for the evening performance.

"Spending the entire day watching students engage with professional artists, challenge themselves in new styles, and then step onto a sold-out stage with confidence is a powerful reminder of what high-quality arts education makes possible," said Bell.

All-State Honors That Redefined the Record Books

Three KIHS dancers were recognized as **2025–2026 Maryland All-State Dancers**:

- **Nadia Wilde**, Senior — third consecutive All-State medal
- **Dylan Miller**, Senior — second consecutive All-State medal
- **Emily Dryer**, Sophomore — first All-State medal

Wilde became the **first student in QACPS history** to earn three consecutive All-State medals.

"Being named All-State in dance for the third time feels both rewarding and humbling," said Wilde. "As the first to reach this milestone, I'm motivated to keep pushing myself artistically and technically."

Miller also made history as the first male dancer from QACPS to earn All-State honors — and not once, but twice.

"To represent Kent Island High School among so many talented dancers is something I could have never imagined when I first started dancing at three years old," said Miller. "To win this award two years in a row and a scholarship for dance means so much to me."

Dryer added, "Winning All-State for the first time as a sophomore feels unreal. It showed me that success in dance is one percent inspiration and ninety-nine percent perspiration, as Mikhail Baryshnikov said."

In front of a packed auditorium, **Wilde and Miller were also awarded $1,000 annual scholarships** to the University of Maryland, Baltimore County Dance Department. Out of approximately 150 dancers statewide who auditioned, only four were selected — with Kent Island High School the only school to receive two awards.

Kent Island High School performed *"Fading Echoes"*

- **Choreographer:** Nadia Wilde (Student)
- **Dancers:** Nadia Wilde, Dylan Miller, Emily Dryer, McKenzie Meredith, Meghan Outten, Brooke Secrist, Farrah Wilde
- **Dance Instructor:** Amber Wright

Queen Anne's County High School performed *"Inner Chaos"*

- **Choreographer:** Gabby Pfeifer, CCF Associate Teaching Artist
- **Dancers:** Isabel Ruth, Mariotlita Perez Perez, Madison Kern, Emma Wright
- **Dance Instructor:** Kristen Tyler

QACHS Dancers with their Choreographer (left to right): Gabby Pfeifer, Madison Kern, Emma Wright, Mariolita Perez, Isabel Ruth

QACHS's performance, *"Inner Chaos,"* choreographed by Gabby Pfeifer — a CCF Associate Teaching Artist and former KIHS All-State Dancer — marked another milestone for the district. Pfeifer's return represented a full-circle moment as she choreographed QACHS's first-ever piece accepted into the evening Showcase Concert, bridging past student success with present instructional excellence.

"The Maryland Dance Showcase was so much fun," said Isabel Ruth of QACHS. "I loved learning new styles and taking classes from different teachers. I was honored to be part of the first group from Queen Anne's County High School to perform there. The environment was very welcoming, and I loved watching the wide range of styles represented on stage."

Reflecting on the experience, **Kristen Tyler**, QACHS Dance Instructor, added, "This year's Maryland Public High School Dance Showcase allowed our students to demonstrate their talents through Ms. Pfeifer's choreography, while also building community with dancers from across the state. When we debriefed on the way home, students shared how grateful they were for the opportunity and the connections they made."

Check out our YouTube Short with highlights from this event here.