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Micah Hasik, front and Kaitlyn Ralston perform during the annual Dance Images Mother's Day show. The two have been dancing since they were 3 years old under the guidance of their mothers and instructors, Lana Hasik and Karen Ralston. L&T photos/Earl Watt

By EARL WATT • Leader & Times Dance Images has been providing Mother's Day memories since 1979, but two instructors found themselves in the role of being the mother watching their children perform for the last time in the annual tradition.

Karen Ralston and Lana Hasik have been training young girls, and the occasional boy, to dance, and the studio performs at a number of events throughout the year, but the Mother's Day show is the grand finale each year, and there is a special emphasis on the senior class. Kaitlyn Ralston and Micah Hasik have grown up in the studio with their moms, and they made their final appearance Sunday.

"It's a little sad today when you see your youngest take her last time on stage with Dance

Images,” Karen said.

When it was Kaitlyn’s time to dance, she continued to showcase the talent she developed under her mother’s watchful eye since she was 3 years old.

“It was memorable,” she said “I got to spend it with my mom. It is something we shared since I started.”

The two have become so connected that words are not always needed.

“We have a connection when I’m dancing,” Kaitlyn said. “We make eye contact, and we talk through our eyes. It is actually a lot of fun.”

Karen may have high expectations for her daughter when she is on stage, but it Kaitlyn has lived up to them.

“She’s done a great job for us,” Karen said. “When you are sitting in the audience watching your own child, you hold your breath a little more, and you want to make sure they get through each routine to the best of their ability.”

The day was also special for seniors Paige Ermann, Jamie Brond, Meghan Hanna, Lauren harp and Riley Hay.

“We are saying goodbye to a great group of girls,” Karen said. “It’s not just Kaitlyn, it’s the whole group. We have watched them grow up since they were 3-year-olds on this stage. They have been in our homes. We’ve had them over for dinner. We’ve taken trips together. Basically, every aspect of our lives is spent with these girls.”

Instructor Lana Hasik also shared in watching her daughter represent Dance Images for the last time. “It is so special to have Micah with me all this time,” Lana said. “We have had such a good time. Her friends have been best friends. They have grown up in my house, she has grown up in their homes. We are a really close bunch.” From a toddler to a teen, and now preparing for graduation and college, Micah has grown up, as those who attend the annual recital have seen for more than three decades.

“It is wonderful to see what she has grown to become,” Lana said. “To see her go to college and start a new chapter in her life.”

Micah will take with her the memories of being on stage in James Maskus Auditorium, and also

those moments she spent with her dance mates.

“It is really special that I can share this with all the girls that I have danced with forever and that I’ve had the opportunity to be with them,” Micah said. “It has been a special time.”

Being the instructor’s daughter does bring with it a heightened sense of responsibility in the studio.

“I feel more pressure,” Micah said. “I have to work harder. I can’t get away with slacking off.”

Lana admitted that it is probably tougher on the instructor’s kids.

“I probably expect more,” Lana said. “I expect her to do it perfectly, but none of us do.”

What girls have gained has been more than just the ability to showcase the most current techniques.

“It gives them self confidence,” Lana said. “They are able to get in front of people. They grow as individuals when they stick with it and work hard at it.”

For years, Lana has given the final bow of the senior class, but this year, there was a tremble in her voice with her daughter in the line. Still, she recited the traditional farewell, ending it with, “There’s nothing more that I can do, so I make my bow to you.”

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