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10 Questions with Dance Designs' Susan Mendoza Friedman

Inspired by her students, Friedman keeps her dance studio family-oriented.

By [Marisa Powers](#) | [Email the author](#) | 5:45 am

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10 Questions, Shoot!

Q: What did you dream of being as a kid?

This was the toughest question! I partially dreamed of being a dancer and a teacher, but I can't say there was really anything specific—it was a long time ago!

Q: How does your personality play into your business?

I'm extremely organized, creative, even tempered, sensitive to people, hard-working, and I like to work with kids.

Q: At what moment did you decide to open a business?

I was teaching public school, doing a lot of after-school dance programs, and I also taught a dance class during the summer for the Barnstable parks and recreation department. I was encouraged by all the parents who wanted me to do more than the summer classes, and it just snowballed from there.

Q: What inspired you?

Dance was always my hobby, my passion. To share my love for dance and my love for teaching kids—those two passions melded and got me teaching dance. The kids enjoyed it so much it made it feel worthwhile - their feedback (and their parents' feedback) is what inspired me.

Q: Describe the biggest challenge of owning a business in the town of Barnstable?

I haven't run into many challenges. I guess I would say that closing times for the schools for the younger students are late, so the earliest class I can have is not until 4 in the afternoon. By then, sometimes the kids are tired. It's hard to make a workable schedule.

Also, I wish there were more of a public transportation system. Older students could get a ride to the studio right from school.

Q: Describe the best thing about owning a business in the town of Barnstable?

Barnstable is the center of the Cape. I am able to draw from Brewster, Mashpee, Dennis-Yarmouth, sometimes even Falmouth, plus all of the Barnstable villages. The location of the studio is great—I feel like there is more diversity in Hyannis than in other regions, plus we offer scholarships available so that under-privileged children have access to dance education.

Q: What is one thing you would never change about your business?

My faculty— they are very talented, committed, have the same philosophies as I do, and very people-oriented. We try to be fair economically, try to work with people who are undergoing bad economic times. We teach kids from age 3 to 18, and we have oodles of kids who have been there for 10 years, and I think it's because we have a family-oriented atmosphere. We're more about enjoying dance and not churning out professional dancers. I would never change that.

Q: What is your business' greatest asset?

The family feeling we have and our wholesome values. We're not just teaching but nurturing individuals. For example, we try to teach life lessons through dance, such as Dancing for a Cure [an event that raises money for breast and ovarian cancer research].

Q: What is your favorite spot in town?

Other than Dance Designs? Sampson's Island in Cotuit. I spend a lot of time at this water spot.

Q: What's one thing the community should know about you?

What you see is what you get! I'm dedicated to students and to offering the best dance education. There's really nothing hidden about me, unless you count that I am a huge Patriots fan. I live for the New England Patriots.

Friedman officially started Dance Designs Inc. about 20 years ago, though she has been teaching for over 30 years. Learn more about her dance studio and the upcoming Dance Marathon at www.dancedesignshyannis.com.

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