

## AMENIA

### Children show off their dancing shoes

By CORY ALLYN - Staff Reporter

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AMENIA — The “Dancing with the Stars of Tomorrow” dance recital landed in the Eugene Brooks Intermediate School’s gym last Sunday afternoon, as children in grades one to six took the skills they’d honed for the last 10 weeks and put them to good use.

A stylish variety of dance moves and costumes kept the crowd entertained throughout, as the program ran through dances ranging from the “YMCA” to Romanian folk dance to the waltz to a tribute to Michael Jackson. There was even a solo fox trot number executed by James Wheeler and Abbygail Hoke. James, who is 11 and in fifth grade, is the only boy who has remained in the program through the years.

“I just like dancing,” he said after the recital, adding that he was definitely going to continue in the program next year.

This the fourth year of the program under the instruction of June Kaufmann, but the town of Amenia has been putting on dance classes for more than 20 years, Councilwoman Vicki Doyle said at the beginning of the recital. Doyle has been a strong advocate for the program through the years, helping it receive grant funding from groups like the Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation and the Dutchess County Youth Bureau, that, combined, contributed \$3,000 in funding toward this year’s services.

“Nothing stops June from producing an incredible show after just 10 weeks of working with your children,” Doyle told the crowd.

“It’s a great opportunity for [children] to experience something outside the box,” added state Assemblyman Marc Molinaro, who attended the event. “We have a lot of things to celebrate, but this is the year to congratulate your kids on their accomplishments.”

Ten weeks of classes only translates to 10 hours total for the children to put on the performance, Kaufmann pointed out after the recital. This year a few more dances were added, which she said the children handled impressively.

“This was the first year for folk music and for Michael Jackson,” she said. “The biggest thrill for the children was to learn the moonwalk.”

Kaufmann said she would always love to have more boys in the program, and she is hoping that James Wheeler might be able to break the barrier stopping many boys from continuing with the program as they get older.

“They just don’t know how much fun it is!” she said.