

## Inspired by her autistic son, Alabama woman creates organization where anyone can dance

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When Kerrie Benson was a young dance teacher in her native Birmingham, a little girl walked into her ballet class accompanied by her mom, who pulled Kerrie aside and explained that her daughter had autism. The class didn't go well for the girl, who was overwhelmed by the loud noises and all the other students in the class.

"She freaked out," Kerrie remembers. "I could see the heartbreak on that mama's face."

Later, when her first child, Rock, was diagnosed with autism, Kerrie found herself in that mother's shoes. She and her husband had moved to Mobile just six weeks after Rock was born. As he grew older, she realized that there wasn't much for special-needs children to do. She couldn't just sign Rock up for soccer or baseball or even a regular dance class.

"We were desperate to find somewhere we could fit," she says.

Rock liked music, and he liked to dance. With her own dance background - Kerrie had taught dance for 20 years - she had an epiphany. She had always dreamed of opening her own studio where she would teach competitive, Broadway-type dancers.

Inspired by Rock, Kerrie pursued her dream, but with a twist: She would teach children and adults with special needs how to dance. In 2009, she started Dance Without Limits with just eight students in the first class, which was held at an existing studio in Mobile.



The number of participants doubled each year. Dance Without Limits

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