

Extended program offers increased support

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THE state government will provide more opportunities for children to be active and socially connected through the expansion of the Sports Vouchers program.

This year the government announced a refreshed program name, 'Sports Vouchers Plus,' where children from reception to Year 9 will be eligible to receive double the support through two \$100 vouchers per calendar year.

For the first time, music lessons and active recreation have been incorporated into the program, to get young people engaged in the community and away from screens.

The Power of Dance in Murray Bridge has been part of the program for a few years and owner, director and teacher Jenna Hann said sports vouchers allowed more children to participate in classes and activities, such as dance, which offered numerous health and developmental benefits.

"They also help me to continue my mission of creating opportunities for people who live in regional areas such as Murray Bridge," she said.

"By reducing financial barriers, it enables families to say 'yes' to more experiences for their children.

"In today's economy, where Australian families are feeling the effects of inflation more than ever, the South Australian Government's decision to expand the Sports Voucher program by doubling the amount to \$200, provides vital support.

"This expansion helps families to continue



The Power of Dance in Murray Bridge is excited to continue being a part of the state government's sports voucher program. (Supplied)

to provide their children with a sense of belonging and community through sports and recreational activities.

"These activities also build resilience, self-esteem, work ethic, problem solving and interpersonal skills - qualities that are essential for success and fulfilment in their later life."

Ms Hann said the addition of dance lessons

to the sport vouchers was a great move by the state government as classes did not just teach dance routines.

"Dance supports physical wellbeing by improving balance, coordination, spatial awareness, strength and flexibility, endurance and aerobic fitness," she said.

"Dance also supports emotional, intellectual, social and occupational wellbeing.

"It releases 'happy hormones' that improve mood and reduce stress.

"Dancing enhances cognition, increases attention and focus, and is a fantastic way of developing memory."

Ms Hann said dancers acquired valuable skills such as strong work ethic, fast learning, good communication and adaptability which made them great contributors to their communities and workplaces.

"Studies have shown that physical activities like dancing can be as effective as medication and therapy for managing mental health," she said.

"According to the latest release of census data, dance classes were the most popular organised sport for girls and the second most popular for all children aged five to 14 years, following swimming.

"This highlights the demand for government support of alternative physical activities such as dance.

"It is my hope that with the increase in the amount for the sports vouchers that more people are able to access sports and recreational activities, as they are invaluable to the development of children.

"I also hope that my current students will use the additional amount to take on additional classes, as the more classes students take, the more benefits we see."

For more information on The Power of Dance, visit: thepowerofdance.com.au/

Families can claim their Sports Vouchers via sportsvouchers.sa.gov.au