

Dance Institute to open new facility in D.C.

Washington Business Journal - October 27, 2006

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The Dance Institute of Washington, which started nearly 20 years ago in a church basement, is opening a new \$5 million facility in Columbia Heights.

The new institute, at 3400 14th St. NW, features 12,000 square feet of space dedicated to arts education and dance training. The facility also houses a 5,000-square-foot child care center owned and operated by Nation's Capital Child & Family Development.

The dance institute, which has 21 employees, is keeping its existing 3,000-square-foot space at 128 M St. NW, where it has been since 1999. It will offer some of this space to other nonprofit organizations and small businesses.

The new facility, equipped with four dance studios, was designed by Bethesda-based Shinberg.Levinas. "The architectural firm did an excellent job in using the space," says Fabian Barnes, a former Dance Theatre of Harlem soloist, who founded the D.C. dance institute in 1987.

The local dance institute started as a summer program, in a church basement, for underserved youth in D.C. Now the institute is one of the largest African American nonprofit arts organizations in the Washington area.

In addition to dance studios, the new facility contains an education resource center and administrative offices. With the expanded space, the institute, which serves about 300 youth now, hopes to add 75 to 100 youth a year until it reaches about 700.

To pay for the new facility, the dance institute received funding from the D.C. Department of Housing and Community Development and numerous foundations, Barnes says.

"We've always been firmly rooted in the community," he says. "It's just putting one foot in front of the other."