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MERCY BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **PITTSBURGH PHILLIPS TAKES GOLD MEDAL IN DANCING CLASSROOMS “COLORS OF THE RAINBOW” COMPETITION**

**Enthusiastic young ballroom dancers demonstrate skill, poise and teamwork while vying for title**

PITTSBURGH, PA (January 9, 2010) -- Fifth-graders from Pittsburgh Phillips K-5 today took home the gold medal in the “Colors of the Rainbow” competition, capping off the inaugural semester of Mercy Behavioral Health’s Dancing Classrooms Pittsburgh. Held at Pittsburgh Allderdice on Saturday, January 9, 2010, the event featured 12 boys and girls from each of six Pittsburgh Public Schools. They were selected from more than 300 students following 10 weeks of instruction to represent their respective elementary schools in the final dance-off.

Dressed in their finest, young couples danced the Merengue, Foxtrot, Rumba, Tango, and Swing while parents, teachers and fellow classmates cheered them on.

Final results are as follows:

**Gold Medal:** Pittsburgh Phillips K-5

**Silver Medals:** Pittsburgh Allegheny K-5 and Pittsburgh Spring Hill K-5

**Bronze Medals:** Pittsburgh Arlington K-8, Pittsburgh King K-8, Pittsburgh West Liberty K-5

“Colors of the Rainbow” judges included: Joseph Aiken, president, USA Dance, Pittsburgh Chapter; Jennifer Christophel, site director, Dancing Classrooms Western Maryland; and Susan Gillis Kruman, dance instructor, university of Pittsburgh School of Education. Mistress of ceremonies Jo Jo Graham, director of Dancing Classrooms Northeast Ohio, kept the lively program moving.

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## **Phillips takes gold medal in “Colors of the Rainbow”**

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Dancing Classrooms began in 1994 in New York City under the direction of Pierre Dulaine and Yvonne Marceau, directors of American Ballroom Theater. It is now an international program serving more than 40,000 students.

Mercy Behavioral Health introduced Dancing Classrooms Pittsburgh in the fall of 2009 as part of its prevention program, with the Pittsburgh Public Schools as its partner. Additional first-year funding was provided by the Birmingham Foundation, Riverset Credit Union and Tobacco Free Allegheny.

International Champion Ballroom Dancers Terry and Rozana Sweeney, owners of Art and Style Studio on Pittsburgh’s South Side, were specially trained to serve as instructors. From September through December 2009, they conducted a series of 20 classes that were incorporated into the school curriculum.

Teachers and principals agree that the program has a positive impact on participating students.

“Too often, we try to teach students about respect and teamwork by talking at them,” said Barbara Rudiak, assistant superintendent of K-5 schools. “By engaging in less talk and more music along with 10 weeks of dance lessons, they learned the importance of teamwork. They learned how to lead and follow. They learned how to be respectful of each other. They learned how to celebrate each other’s successes and to encourage one other when they needed support.

“The students also garnered support and encouragement from their teachers, principals, staff, and members of the community,” Rudiak continued. “This resulted in them believing that if they worked hard, they could dance with a member of the opposite sex in front of a large audience and actually win a competition.”

Based on the success of the program, Mercy Behavioral Health plans to expand Dancing Classrooms Pittsburgh in the 2010-11 school year. For more information, contact Mark Rogalsky, prevention services supervisor, Mercy Behavioral Health, at 412.320-2321.

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### **ABOUT MERCY BEHAVIORAL HEALTH:**

Mercy Behavioral Health (MBH) provides a full continuum of recovery-oriented, community-based mental health, mental retardation, and drug/alcohol treatment and prevention services to people of Southwestern PA. Established in 1969, MBH is part of the Pittsburgh Mercy Health System and Catholic Health East, sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy. For more information, visit [www.pmhs.org](http://www.pmhs.org)

### **ABOUT DANCING CLASSROOMS:**

Dancing Classrooms began in 1994 in New York City under the direction of Pierre Dulaine and Yvonne Marceau, directors of American Ballroom Theater. The program currently reaches more than 40,000 children in 400 schools in 13 cities. Through Dulaine’s unique teaching methods, students broaden their experiences, create healthy relationships with others, learn social awareness, and become young ladies and gentlemen. For more information, visit [www.dancingclassrooms.com](http://www.dancingclassrooms.com)

