

ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

Teens mix dance with culture

By Ingrid Paulsen

The Saanich News

Dance has long been used as a means of expression and a link to cultural beliefs and history. The Shan~e~Punjab dancers are not only continuing the traditions of Indian culture, they are doing it with a flare that is uniquely their own.

"It is really a Hip Hop version of East Indian dance with traditional steps in it," says Amy Grewal who is participating with her group in Saanich's Totally Teen Talent show April 8.

Grewal has been dancing with the group that was founded by her sister since 1993. Their performance next month will be different in that both the younger and older students will be wheeling around the stage in vibrant colors with some flying higher than others fly.

"Because Amy used to be a cheerleader we've added a piece from cheerleading," says Sonya Grewal, who is responsible for selecting the music and arranging the choreography not to mention tying in cultural values at the group's



DARREN STONE/NEWS GROUP PHOTOGRAPHER

Shan~e~Punjab members back row (l-r) Aneeta Takhar, Sherry Dhillon, Harparah Sra, Amy Grewal and Janessa Sundher and front row (l-r) Sonya Nirwan, Jaswinder Bamra and Keira Dheensan will perform next month at the Totally Talented Teen show.

FIRST OF A SERIES OF PROFILES

weekly meetings. "We focus on heritage, knowing your roots and respecting yourself. But we also talk about learning how to adapt to the culture around you," says Sonya.

The group has been together and performing long enough to work out intricate steps to the music that incorporates traditional rhythms with modern remixes.

But dance is not all they do. The motto they follow is AS-SERT, which spells out Attitude, Support, Sportsmanship, Effort, Respect and To communicate. Together they work through issues that they are faced with as teens, including bullying and racism.

"We are not counsellors so we do dramas and skits to help each other. We talk about

how we would deal with things as a human being and work things out as a team," offers Sonya.

The bond between the dancers is strong and apparent in their presence on stage, where they weave in the stories of their ancestors with their contemporary daily experiences in a display of talent and confidence that is all ma-

neuvered to the beat of the music.

"I love dancing. I think I'll always do it on the side. I like the teaching about values through dancing. And I like meeting the other kids in the community," says Amy, who has started doing some teaching recently and can see herself taking over for her sister when the time is right.

