

Caruthers Creative Center Collection (AC128)

Introduction:

The Caruthers Creative Center Collection contains photographs, a proclamation celebrating 50 years of community service, a 1st place 1998 Regency Talent Competition trophy, and photocopies of three certificates received from the American Royal Association in 1985, the Kansas City St. Patrick's Day Parade, Inc. in 1985, and the United Minority Media Association, Inc. in 1999. The collection also contains a 2005 flyer for a Caruthers Creative Center Hip-Hop event that featured Darrin Henson.

Descriptive Summary:

Creator: Donna S. Johnson and Edward M. Johnson

Title: Caruthers Creative Center Collection

Date Range: 1967-2019

Size: 0.209 Linear Feet (1 box + 2 OS)

Collection Number: AC128

Donor Information:

Donna S. (Caruthers) Johnson and Edward M. Johnson

Citation Note:

Caruthers Creative Center Collection (AC128), Black Archives of Mid-America, Kansas City, Missouri

Administrative Information:

Reproduction Restrictions: Unrestricted.

Access Restrictions: Unrestricted.

Historical Sketch:

The Caruthers Dance Academy was founded in 1965 by sisters Betty Jo, and Donna Sheryl, and their mother Dorothy Caruthers. Over the years, the Caruthers Dance Academy evolved into the Caruthers Creative Center. The studio became a family affair, and several family members

worked alongside the founders. The Caruthers Creative Center served the Kansas City metro area for 54 years, offering programs in dance, tap, drill team, karate, and pageantry competitions. It was a well-known establishment that provided a safe space for individuals to engage in various art forms. Unfortunately, it permanently closed in 2019 after five decades of operation.

Biographical Sketch:

Dorothy M. Caruthers

Dorothy was one of the founders of Caruthers Creative Center. She passed away on October 24th, 2012, at the age of 103. She is buried at Forest Hill Cemetery in Kansas City, Missouri. No further documentation is available at this time.

Betty Jo Caruthers Nichols

Betty Jo Caruthers Nichols was one of the founders of Caruthers Creative Center. She passed away at home on August 26, 2009, at the age of 67. She is buried at Forest Hill Cemetery in Kansas City, Missouri. No further documentation is available at this time.

Donna Caruthers Johnson

Donna Caruthers Johnson was one of the founders of Caruthers Creative Center. Donna married Edward Johnson, who also worked for the studio starting in 1968 as their karate sensei and the Caruthers Creative Center Manager. No further documentation is available at this time.

Marion Caruthers

Their brother, Marion Caruthers (Tony), joined the team in 1967 as the tap and jazz instructor. No further documentation is available at this time.

Important Dates for Caruthers Creative Center:

1967- Caruthers Creative Center held its first annual dance recital.

1967- Marion (known as Tony) Caruthers joined the team as the tap/jazz instructor.

1968- Edward Johnson (Donna Caruthers Johnson's spouse) joined the team as the Karate Sensei and Caruthers Creative Center Manager.

- 1974-** Held competition for the Miss Black Missouri Pageant. Lou Rawls was a celebrity judge that year.
- 1975-** Held 2nd competition for the Miss Black Missouri Pageant.
- 1979-** Caruthers Creative Center held a workshop with celebrity Eartha Kitt in attendance.
- 1981-** Caruthers Creative Center received a Resolution from the Missouri House of Representatives, signed by Speaker of the House, Bob Griffin.
- 1981-** Marion (known as Tony) Caruthers, formed a drill team, the 64th Street Steppers.
- 1982-** The 64th Street Steppers participated in the annual Overland Park Fall Festival parade and took 1st place.
- 1985-** Caruthers Creative Center received a Proclamation of Achievement from Dance Olympus.
- 1985-** The 64th Street Steppers participated in the American Royal Parade and received a certificate of support from the American Royal Association.
- 1985-** The 64th Street Steppers participated in the St. Patrick's Parade.
- 1987-** Caruthers Creative Center held a workshop with Mr. New York | Frank Hatchet.
- 1992-** Caruthers Creative Center students performed with the Nicholas Brothers (Fayard Nicholas & Cholly Atkins) Hosted by Billie Mahoney.
- 1994-** Caruthers Creative Center students performed with Tre' Dumas (tap dancer/choreographer/actor) featured in North America & European tours of "River Dance".
- 1995-** Dance troupe the Hot Steppers participated in Kids Fun Fest.
- 1995-** Savion Glover attends Caruthers Creative Center autograph event.
- 1998-** The Hot Steppers participated in the National Regency Talent competition. Performed ten dances—received nine 1st place trophies & one 2nd place trophy.
- 1998-** Formed the Caruthers Arts' Alliance and presented a play titled *Not Guilty*.
- 1999-** Caruthers Creative Center received the United Minority Media Association, Inc., Award for *Time Well Spent in the Community*, signed by Rosemary Davis Kelly and M.C. Richardson.
- 2000-** Caruthers Creative Center received a Proclamation for community service from Mayor Kay Barnes.
- 2001-** Caruthers Creative Center students performed for the Kansas City Water Department.
- 2001-** The Caruthers Arts' Alliance hosted a hip-hop workshop with celebrity Richard "Swoop" Whitebear.

2002-Caruthers Creative Center received a 2nd Proclamation for community service from Mayor Kay Barnes.

2002-Caruthers Creative Center students performed for the National Tap Day, a tribute to Bill “Bojangles” Robinson.

2003-Caruthers Creative Center students performed in the 1st annual DanceinKC Showcase at the Folly Theatre of Kansas City.

2004- The Caruthers Arts’ Alliance presented 2nd play titled *Mixed Nuts* at the Paseo High School for the Performing Arts, Kansas City, Missouri.

2005-Caruthers Creative Center was selected by the Kansas City Metro Bus for free advertisement at their MAX bus station.

2005-The Caruthers Arts’ Alliance hosted the K.C. Hip Hop Jamm with celebrity hip-hop artist Darrin Henson.

2005-The Caruthers Arts’ Alliance hosted its 1st Summer Enrichment Camp (a 7-week program for youth ages 7 to 13).

2012-Caruthers Creative Center students perform for Chiefs’ half-time.

2015-Caruthers Creative Center students perform for the UMKC ROOS at Swinney Recreation Center.

2015-Caruthers Creative Center hosted a Summer Dance Intensive Workshop.

2016-Caruthers Creative Center students perform for the Palestine Missionary Baptist Church. Mayor Sly James congratulates the studio for its participation.

2017-Caruthers Creative Center students perform for the Kauffman Summer Festival.

2018-Caruthers Creative Center students perform for the Kauffman Summer Festival.

2019-Caruthers Creative Center received its 3rd proclamation from Mayor Sylvester “Sly” James Jr. for 50 years of community service.

2019-Caruthers Creative Center permanently closed after 54 years of service from 1965-2019.

Scope and Content Note:

Series 1: Proclamation

This series contains a framed proclamation. The proclamation states: *Celebrating the 50th Dance Recital of Caruthers Creative Center in Kansas City, Missouri (Sylvester “Sly” James Jr.,*

Mayor) *City of Kansas City, Missouri*. No Date. This item has been removed from the collection and placed in the Art Tills.

Series 2: Trophy

This series contains a 1st place trophy from the 1998-1999 Regency Talent Competition.

Series 3: Photographs

This series includes photographs of the founders, various events, and the Caruthers Creative Center building. There are a few photocopied photographs within this series as well.

Series 4: Awards

This series contains a 1st place 1998 Regency Talent Competition trophy in good condition.

Series 5: Flyer

This series contains a photocopied flyer from *Caruthers' Arts Alliance Presents: Darrin's Dance Groove Hip Hop Event and Showcase featuring Darrin Henson*. UMKC Pierson Hall. Saturday, August 27th, 2005.

Collection Inventory:

Series 1: Proclamation

f. 1 Celebrating the 50th Dance Recital of Caruthers Creative Center in Kansas City, Missouri (Sylvester "Sly" James Jr., Mayor) *City of Kansas City, Missouri*. No Date. (AT 1.C.2 BACK)

Series 2: Trophy, 1998-1999

f. 2 Regency Talent Competition Trophy, 1998-1999

Series 3: Photographs

- f. 3 Photographs
- a. (4) 9 x 11 photocopied photographs
 - b. (31) 4.5 x 6.5 photographs

Series 4: Awards

- f. 4 Photocopied Awards
 - a. American Royal Association, 1985
 - b. Kansas City St. Patrick's Day Parade, 1985
 - c. United Minority Media Association, 1999

Series 5: Photocopied Flyer

- f. 5 Caruthers' Arts Alliance Presents: Darrin's Dance Groove Hip Hop Event and Showcase featuring Darrin Henson.

Processed by Kat Miller, Assistant Archivist, January 2025. Updated by Laura Darnell, Head Archivist, May 2026.

Sources:

Legacy. 2012. "DOROTHY CARUTHERS Obituary (2012) - Kansas City, MO - Kansas City Star." Legacy.com. Legacy. October 28, 2012.

<https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/kansascity/name/dorothy-caruthers-obituary?id=4439972>.

Legacy. 2009. "Betty Nichols Obituary (2009) - Kansas City, MO - Kansas City Star." Legacy.com. Legacy. August 30, 2009.

<https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/kansascity/name/betty-nichols-obituary?id=4377081>.

"Home." 2019. Caruthers Creative Center Dance Studio. September 3, 2019.

<https://carutherscreativecenter.wordpress.com/home/>.