

Bedazzled by YULETIDE DANCERS



Natalie Graham of Santa Paula sings for patients and visitors Wednesday at Ventura County Medical Center's Pediatric Oncology Clinic.



PHOTOS BY ANTHONY PLASCENCIA/THE STAR

Makenna Ortiz and Julia Swanson perform an excerpt from the Ventura County Ballet Company's "The Nutcracker" on Wednesday at VCMC's Pediatric Oncology Clinic.

■ 'Nutcracker' ballerinas entertain children at cancer clinic

By Donna Griffin
 Special to The Star

Bedazzling ballerinas battled dastardly dancing rats, bringing smiles to the children in the waiting room of Ventura County Medical Center's Pediatric Oncology Clinic on Wednesday. Young patients fighting their

own battles with cancer saw a special presentation of excerpts from the Ventura County Ballet Company's upcoming performances of the holiday favorite "The Nutcracker."
 "It is the story of a Christmas when a young girl named Clara received the gift of a nutcracker," Kathleen Noblin told the children

and parents. Noblin, the ballet company's founder and executive director, went on to explain how in the ballet's story, all the toys under the Christmas tree come to life and fight a fierce battle with mice that appear as giant, evil rats.
 Costumed dancers Anna Miller, Makenna Ortiz and Julia Swanson, all 14-year-old Ven-

turans, twirled, leapt and pirouetted to the music of Tchaikovsky. Noblin also brought Natalie Graham, 17, and brother, Jesse, 13, of Santa Paula, to cheer the patients by singing the Judy Garland standards "Happy Days Are Here Again" and "Get Happy."

See **BALLET, 2B**



A wooden nutcracker stands on a table at Ventura County Medical Center's Pediatric Oncology Clinic in Ventura on Wednesday. Young patients fighting cancer saw a special presentation of excerpts from the Ventura County Ballet Company's upcoming performances.

BALLET from **1B**

The ballet performance was made possible by the efforts of the ballet company, the clinic and the Teddy Bear Cancer Foundation, which helps families of children with cancer overcome financial and emotional hurdles.

"A lot of them aren't going to be able to go anywhere around the holidays, at least not being around other children," said Nikki Katz, Teddy Bear founder and program director. "If their counts are too low, they can't even go to school because of the compromised immune systems and just how they're feeling."

Noblin, a lifelong dancer,

“A lot of them aren't going to be able to go anywhere around the holidays, at least not being around other children.”

Nikki Katz, *Teddy Bear founder and program director*

understands the special needs of children undergoing cancer treatment.

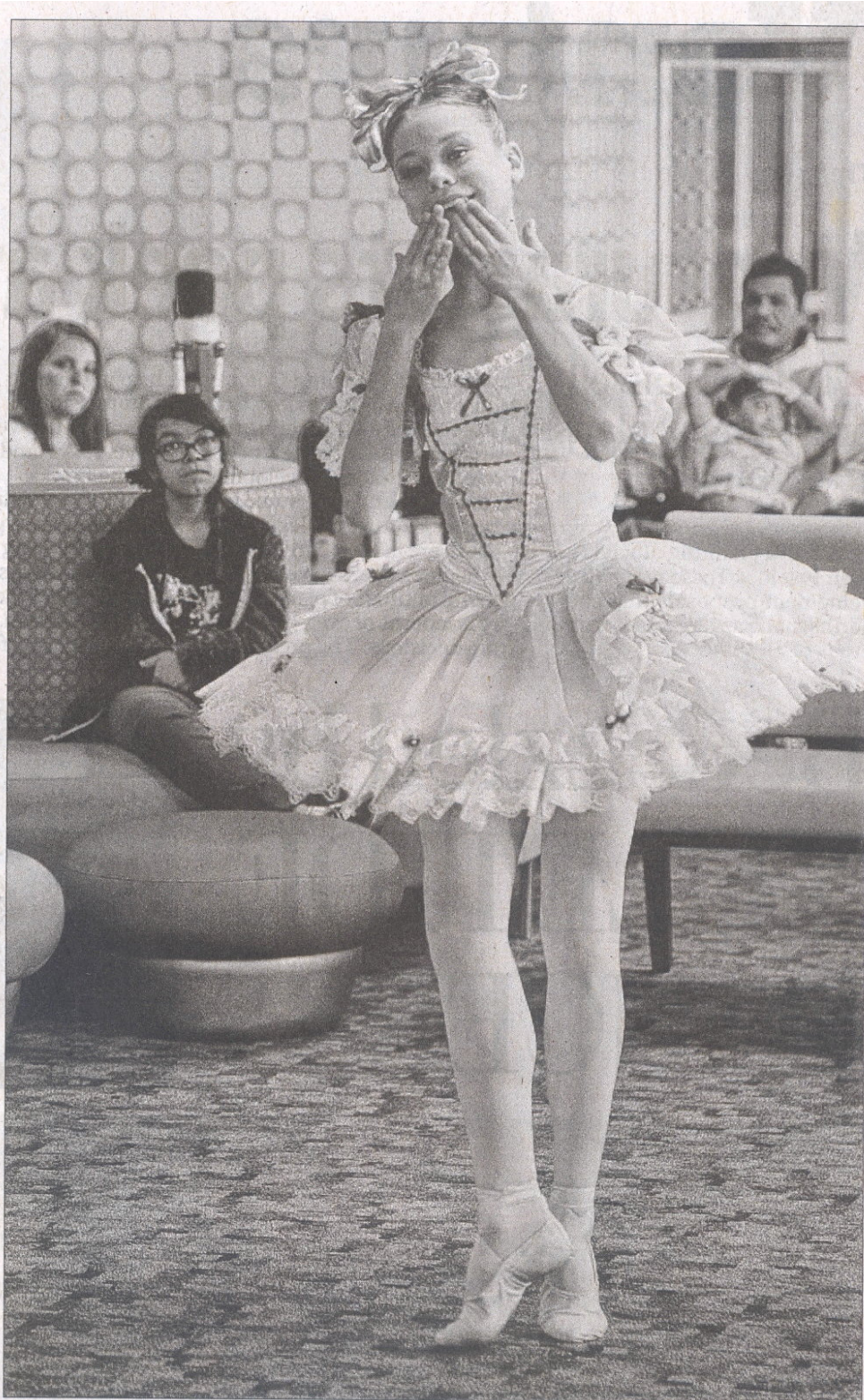
"I'm also a registered nurse," Noblin said. "After I graduated, I was working in pediatric oncology. We were testing the original drugs that they give the children today. For me, it's really gratifying because I can see how far the science has come to keep these children alive. These children are very sick ... and these dancers can give back to children who are not as fortunate as they are."

While most of the chil-

dren present Wednesday were there for a scheduled treatment or doctor's visit, the Montes family came especially for the ballet.

"I love all of the dance. But the best part is the rats," said 11-year-old Jasmine Montes of Thousand Oaks. Jasmine is a monthly patient at the clinic.

"We used to come three times a week, but not anymore," her father, Alejandro Montes, said with a smile. "She finished it, the treatment. She is finished. Now it's just a checkup."



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Anna Miller dances an excerpt from the Ventura County Ballet Company's "The Nutcracker" during a special performance Wednesday for patients and visitors at Ventura County Medical Center's Pediatric Oncology Clinic.

<http://www.vcstar.com/news/2011/nov/02/ballet-company-entertains-children-at-ventura/>