

Alumni Replenishment Grant - Selena Dutton

How has being a member of the Folk Dance Team enhanced your overall BYU experience?

BYU Folk Dance helped me overcome depression while in college because of the community it provided. As a Freshman I didn't realize how hard it would be moving to a new state and adjusting to college with no friends. At the beginning of the semester, I was encouraged to audition for the Folk Dance Ensemble and I was blessed to make the team. God must have known how much I needed this community. My favorite memories of that year came from Folk Dance. We performed a Bollywood dance for the halftime performance at a BYU football game and later performed a dance representing Israel. I remember how exciting it was to be a part of these performances. This team truly became my foundation while I was in school.

When family and friends asked me about college I was more excited to talk to them about Folk Dance than anything else. During Winter semester, I didn't understand my classes, I missed home, I was struggling with my roommate, and didn't have motivation. While every part of school was discouraging, my Folk Dance experience gave me a sense of belonging. It was something where I felt I was improving and where I had support. After serving my mission, it was these memories that drew me back to BYU.

I have loved this last year at BYU all because of the foundation that Folk Dance gave me. I am still part of the team and I have enjoyed the new friends I have made. Folk Dance has affected my overall experience by being the support I needed to keep going as I figured out how to overcome the hardships of college.

What does the BYU Folk Dance experience mean to you?

In my experience, the BYU Folk Dance experience is about creating community both within and outside the program. I talked about what a support my fellow teammates were to me, but the International Folk Dance Ensemble helped me build relationships outside of the program as well. During the fall of 2024, I found out one of my classmates grew up in Hungary. Because of Folk Dance, I got to connect with her and her culture. Another example is after learning the Italian Tarantella, my family got to visit Italy. I had a new excitement and connection with this culture because of Folk Dance.

One of my favorite examples is how it has helped me connect with my roommates. This year I have invited them to join me for Folk Dance rec nights. None of my roommates are dancers, yet this experience allowed them to understand and relate to something that I love. We talked about our favorite dances, and it made them excited to see Christmas Around the World for the first time.

Christmas Around the World was the first dance performance of my friend Ryan and he thought he was going to be the only man there. After showing up at the Marriott Center, he was very mistaken. He expressed how much he loved the show and was interested in auditioning. I believe that culture has a strong way of connecting all types of people. The Folk Dance experience has continued to help me build relationships with people and cultures.

What financial need will this replenishment grant help you to overcome?

This Grant will help me focus on school without having to get a second job. I am currently paying for my own college education including tuition, books, and rent while working a part-time job. BYU has so many great opportunities to build my future which would be hard to balance with a heavy workload. They host resume-building nights, internship support, a variety of minors and extracurriculars to build my skill set outside of my degree. Avoiding two jobs would make participating in Folk Dance a joy rather than something competing for my time. Balancing extra rehearsals leading up to performances would be both physically and mentally exhausting without financial aid. These performances have been some of my favorite memories while at BYU and I hope to continue dancing in them through the rest of my undergraduate years. This Grant would eliminate the restrictions a second job would place on my college life, and provide financial relief and allow greater focus on education.