

OC | VARSITY ARTS

Students dance to inspire selves, others at Festival of Children

Teens get a taste of volunteering at South Coast Plaza event.

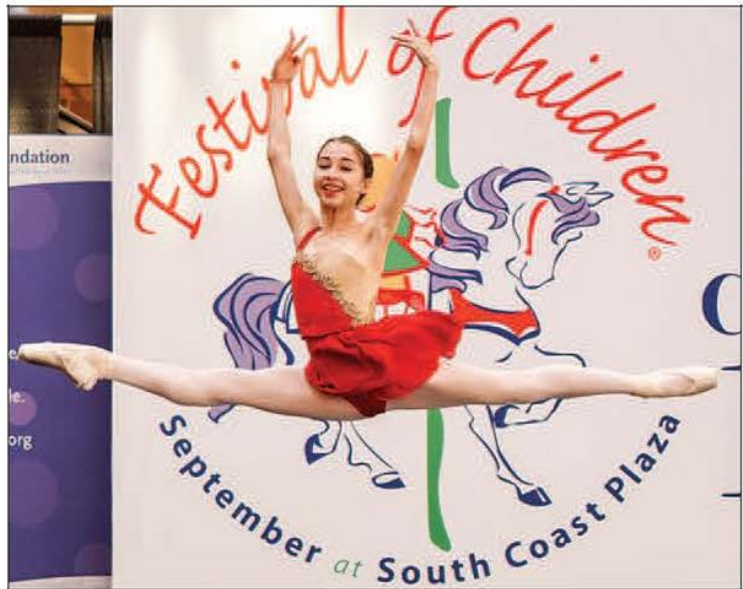
By **KAITLIN WRIGHT**
STAFF WRITER

Amid the games, craft exhibits and charity booths, people attending the 15th annual Festival of Children recently at South Coast Plaza may have caught sight of ballerinas strolling through the mall in their tutus and pointe shoes. The dancers, from Southland Ballet Academy, were on their way to perform on the Carousel Court stage.

“People definitely give us looks as we walk through the stores,” said Huntington Beach High School sophomore **Tatum Backer**. “Obviously we’re not celebrities, but (the attention) is like what it might be like if we carry out our dance passion professionally.”

Southland Ballet Academy has participated in Festival of Children for more than 10 years.

“This is another version of volunteer work,” said Southland di-



ROD VEAL, CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHER

Moorea Pike, a freshman from Laguna Beach High School, performs recently at South Coast Plaza's Festival of Children.

rector **Salwa Rizkalla**. “It helps them make a connection with the whole community. It helps them to be charitable and to believe in charity with no boundaries.”

The 14 students who participated performed solos previously presented at various competi-

tions. Presenting them in a non-competitive environment gave the mall showcase a different feel, they said.

“I like being able to dance and be free and not worry about the

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