

Huge commitment in their quest for success

TWO Carrick kids are reaching for the stars as they aim to dance their way to success.

The talented young sisters from Maybole have already won over 800 dancing trophies and don't plan to stop there.

Ten year-old Shannan Brown is a primary six pupil at Cairn and has been dancing since the tender age of two. Big sister Kayleigh (13), in S2 at Carrick Academy, started when she was five.

The girls are dedicated to dancing, and the fact that it takes up six nights a week of their time, shows it's obvious they don't just class it as a hobby.

This is a way of life not just for the talented duo, but also for their parents and younger sister, who make a huge commitment in financing the girls in their quest for dance success.

After starting dancing lessons with Laura Douglas in Maybole eight years ago, the girls then moved onto current teacher Dawn Turnbull in Ayr. Shortly after, they began entering competitions the length and breadth of the country, picking up not just armfuls of trophies along the way, but titles as well.

Shannan includes winning the British Masters two years ago and the World Masters Freestyle last year among her many successes. She also came second in the latest competition she competed in at Bristol earlier this month. A big achievement, considering she was up against dancers from as far afield as Norway, Ireland and other parts of Europe.

Big sister Kayleigh has won the same competition in Blackpool three times, when she's also been up against hundreds of other girls, and is currently Under 14's Freestyle Champion.

Kayleigh and Shannan don't have much time for anything else, as every Saturday to Thursday, they go along to their classes with Dawn, and every Sunday is for competing in competitions here, there and everywhere.

However, success doesn't come cheap, and with outfits and team suits costing anything from £300 to £1,000, the girls would be thrilled if any kind-hearted businesses or individuals in Carrick could see fit to sponsoring them in any way!

Shannan, who hopes to be a PE teacher when she's older, is currently being sponsored by Welsh dance company, GOSSIP, after being talent spotted by owners Gail and Sheila. This means that the youngster

gets four outfits a year from the company, taking a bit of the pressure off mum Jane-Marie and dad Kenny.

Jane-Marie said: "The outfits are so expensive and it takes a big commitment from the whole family to fund them. It's especially hard having two girls to buy outfits for, but it's the cost of travel to the competitions that kills us financially."

With jaunts to Blackpool twice a year, and other competitions in places like Sheffield and Birmingham, mother and daughters have to hire a minibus for the weekend with a couple of other local dancers. "Most weekends in the year are taken up travelling to one competition or another, and it would be fantastic if any local taxi firms or someone with access to a minibus could donate their vehicle for us to use occasionally."

She laughs: "Obviously I'm not looking for someone to give us an actual minibus to keep, just for us to use, as the cost of hiring one so often is crippling."

The girls dance school will also be taking part in a show at the Gaiety Theatre in the summer and are hoping that someone will come forward to sponsor the troop's track-suits, or help with their costumes.

The Brown sisters are very supportive of each other and are extremely close, although mum says that can change when they're in the house together!

"They are very competitive, but not with each other. They dance in different age groups so they're not trying to beat each other, which is a relief," she said.

The family have also been celebrating another success recently. After applying for a place on a two week course at the Scottish Youth Theatre, they were all delighted to learn that Kayleigh had been accepted for a



Thirteen year-old Kayleigh in yellow with wee sister Shannan (10)

place.

Jane-Marie said: "Kayleigh has always been more into drama and acting and has done three years panto at the Gaiety Theatre in Ayr, so although we are all delighted she's been accepted for the course in July, and she's ecstatic, the course fees are an extra expense on top of everything else.

"She desperately wants to be a choreographer, and I believe she is more than capable of fulfilling her dreams, as is Shannan. Despite their age, they both know what they want to do with their lives and I'm sure they'll succeed.

"As parents, we are over the moon with what they've achieved so far, and we are both very, very proud of them and their wee sister Harley.

"We couldn't ask for better daughters and they always put in 110 per cent commitment and effort to their dancing.

"It's a way of life for the whole family, and the girls have grown up doing this. We

don't push them at all, they do it because they love it. Dancing comes first with them."

Even Jane-Marie finds she has little time for anything else in her life sometimes: "There's not one night of the week that I'm in the house all night. There's always something to be done regarding the dancing.

"Also at competitions, the girls have to be groomed to perfection, and the time it takes to do their hair and make-up is unbelievable. As well as that, we have to do their St Tropez fake tan, nails and eyebrows!"

Any businesses or individuals who would like to help Kayleigh and Shannan by sponsoring them in any way, or help towards their travel costs to competitions, should telephone Jane-Marie on 07795033527 or 01655 882588.

Do you know any kids in Carrick who deserve recognition for their achievements? If so, contact the Carrick Gazette on 01465 712688 and let us know.