

# Pasadena woman taps her way to wellness

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[Emilie Koenig laughs with her dancers before a show at Bayou Theatre at the University of Houston-Clear Lake](#)

By DIANA NORTH

When Emilie Koenig wandered over to a street-side jazz band in San Francisco to jump around and tap her feet to the music at age 2, she had no idea how dance would change her life and lead her back to health as an adult.

Later that week my mom signed me up for tap classes, and the rest is history," said Koenig. Now 24, the Pasadena resident is a graduate student at University of Houston and a dance teacher at Kennedy Dance Theater, 15210 Highway 3 in the Barringer Knoll Plaza, Webster. She recently directed Clear Lake's Space City Tap Festival, which brought together Houston tap dancers to perform and share their love of dance.

But her journey back to the stage has not been easy.

In 2007, Koenig woke up paralyzed on the upper left side of her body a result of Parsonage Turner Syndrome, a rare auto-immune disease. She experienced paralysis a total of five times, leaving her unable to dress herself, shower or comb her own hair.

It was a devastating blow," said Koenig. I stopped dancing entirely and filed all of my lavish dreams on remote shelves in my mind. As far as I was concerned, my life was over."

But last year, her friend and fellow tap dancer, Maud Arnold, came to Houston to teach at a summer convention. She encouraged Koenig to put on her dancing shoes again. After three years without as much as a shuffle, Koenig began to retrain her body to dance.

With the love and support of her parents and the encouragement of her tap dancing friends she reclaimed her passion for dance, and for life.

Tap has always been an integral part of who I am, an innate drive that has urged me to continue pursuing my goals, regardless of the many setbacks and obstacles that have stood in my path," said Koenig. My oldest memories and all of my greatest triumphs have involved wearing tap shoes."

Koenig now shares her love of dance with her students. She says an instructor's job is more than teaching technique, and that she seeks to cultivate passion and excellence" in students that can spill over into their lives both on and off the stage.

Crediting dance for its healing power" and positive energy, Koenig wants to share those gifts with others.

For Koenig, directing the recent Space City Tap Festival allowed her to come full circle in her efforts to bring tap dancing education to the area. The festival was the first of its kind in the past 20 years.

It also brought together Koenig's friends, fellow dancers and sources of inspiration.

I am so proud of Emilie for staying strong and believing in herself and the importance of tap dance," said festival attendee and performer Maud Arnold. It was an honor to be a part of her first tap festival. I'm sure there are many more to come."

For Koenig, the festival and her teaching provide a chance to communicate her passion to others. Tap is a conversation. When you are having an amazing day, you can express that through the dance," Koenig said.

When you are having the worst day of your life, you can let out all of that frustration through the dance.

Never underestimate the power of the dance."