

Business

**BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT:**

**Getting their act together**

Young thespians aspiring for careers in Hollywood learn skills at new La Crescenta studio.

By Zain Shauk

Published: Last Updated Sunday, January 25, 2009 10:12 PM PST

Tiara Avanes is a 12-year-old actress with an agent. But she wouldn't have begun her journey into the entertainment industry if an enthusiastic La Crescenta acting coach hadn't approached her after a dance recital.

The same bubbly coach spotted 17-year-old Clarissa Delgado and her twin sister at a college fair, offering the pair a free lesson and encouraging them to pursue acting.

Now, after 18 months of recruiting in farmers' markets and at school events, coach Mae Ross has grown her list of young clients from two in June 2007 to more than 80 today. She opened her own studio for young actors Wednesday in an attempt to move her business forward.

3-2-1 Talent Showcase Studios, at 3131 Foothill Blvd. in La Crescenta, is the first studio of its kind in the area, said Ross, who has been an acting coach with other companies for more than 20 years.

The studio trains children and teenagers to act on a level that can prepare them for careers in Hollywood, she said.

"This is the real thing," Ross said. "These kids are going to act for real parts and make real money."

Whereas other after-school acting activities might involve a simple script and minimal direction, Ross' studio works to develop students' abilities in front of the camera so that they can perform in front of talent scouts at "showcase" events, where actors perform a set of commercials or short scenes.

The nation's current economic challenges aren't a concern for Ross, who has been able to attract parents and students with prices as low as \$25 for 90-minute group classes and a promise that students will leave the studio more prepared for the real world, regardless of whether they want to act.

"My passion, really, is to see them grow into confident people," she said, explaining that practice with acting in front of a camera can help students with public speaking and in developing their communication skills.

The studio is unique in the Glendale area and will give agents a new opportunity to find local talent, said Jody Alexander, director of the young people's department at Studio City talent agency Kazarian/Spencer/Ruskin and Associates.

"For us, we're looking for the creme de la creme," Alexander said. "And the best way to find that is to visit a set and find someone who is interested in working with us, or go to showcases and do what we call talent scouting." Alexander's agency has signed several actors coached by Ross, she said, adding that children who attend her classes are well prepared for the entertainment business.

"They understand camera technique," she said. "They understand interview technique. As opposed to somebody saying, 'Gee, that looks fun, I think I'll try that,' they have the foundation."

Tiara, who was signed by an agent after she performed a mock commercial in front of scouts, said she had developed nuanced skills from her classes with Ross, who had previously taught out of a dance studio.

"You work on being, like, extra happy, or surprised and really depressed and sad, or enthusiastic," she said, changing her voice to emphasize the tone of each emotion.

Overall, the studio offered an alternative activity for parents, with its own benefits, Ross said.

"Taking acting is like taking a dance class, or a karate class," she said. "It's another activity."

For more information on the studio, call (818) 353-5455 or e-mail [mae@321talentshowcase.com](mailto:mae@321talentshowcase.com).

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Ervin Simonian, 7, break-dances for a crowd during the ribbon-cutting ceremonies last week at 3-2-1 Talent Showcase. (Alex Collins/News-Press)