

Meet Annie

-Feeling warm and welcome in a cold, snowy state



Ten-year old Annie joined CAAM CDT less than two years ago. She was born and raised in a large Chinese-American community in sunny Arcadia, California, so her move to Woodbury, Minnesota, was certainly a culture shock! Where once she spent happy evenings skating and ballet dancing with hundreds of Chinese-American girls just like her, she suddenly found herself the only Chinese girl in her class. Her family was also the only Chinese-American one in their neighborhood. Without her best friends in California, Annie felt lonely and isolated. "I had a lot of free time. I wasn't used to that," she said.

Then her mother found a flier for CAAM CDT's Chinese New Year production. The family attended the show, and Annie was captivated by the beautiful scenes, the amazing traditional costumes, the cultural stories played out through dance, and—of course—the dancers' skills. Best of all, many of the dancers were her age. Annie signed up for dance classes right after the show.

When Annie arrived at her first dance class, she stood anxiously by the door. "I was nervous," she said. "I was afraid that everyone was going to be better than I was and that I wouldn't make any friends."

Even though many of the girls in Annie's class had been dancing together for years, they were "super friendly." One by one, they introduced themselves to her. Annie's mother was also greeted warmly by the other families.

That Chinese New Year show was a turning point in Annie's life in Minnesota. Since joining CAAM CDT, Annie has made all her best friends at dance: "I made friends with Amaris and Annika that very first day. Now, they are part of my permanent friend group. I look forward to seeing them every time."

She has performed at numerous shows, festivals and outreach activities. She's more confident both on stage and in life. When asked what she would say to other kids who might be nervous about joining CAAM CDT, Annie says, "Tell them not to worry. It's fun!"



Annie playing with her friends at a CAAM Chinese Dance Theater outreach

Photos courtesy Jijun He and Shuhui Wang.