

## Legal fancy footwork gets Dancewave its money back

By Claire Glass  
for The Brooklyn Paper

The Park Slope youth dance troupe that was cheated out of more than \$10,000 earlier this year by a rogue travel agent is finally getting its money back.

A lawyer who volunteered his services to the Fourth Avenue company after reading our coverage of the theft said this week that a bank is going to restore the troupe's funds.

"We're feeling great," said Dancewave Director Diane Jacobowitz. "This is a real fairy tale story."

It's a fairy tale story that almost didn't get its happy ending. The troupe was invited to compete in the Aberdeen International Youth Festival in Scotland last fall, and from there, Dancewave's teenaged ensemble worked to raise the money with a benefit show, and part-time jobs.

But Jacobowitz was swindled by an imposter travel agent claiming to work for Virginia-based Adam Travel Services — who absconded with more than \$10,000. Instead of buying the airline tickets, the crook only reserved the flights — taking the money and depositing it in a private account.

News reports of the scam initiated an outpouring of support from the community, including the pro-bono work of lawyer Jay Itkowitz.

Itkowitz targetted Adam Travel, but the agency said that it had been was scammed by the rogue agent, too. That statement allowed Itkowitz to go to Wachovia Bank, which agreed to swallow the loss on the grounds that it had accepted the agent's fraudulent check.

"Ultimately the bank that accepts the fraudulent deposit is on the hook for the loss," said Itkowitz.

Other Park Slope businesses got behind the troupe to help, including workers at Corcoran Realty, who pooled their money and also got their friends involved. British Airways also offered support.

And Nick Kotsonis, owner of the S Club fitness center on Union Street, came through with a \$10,000 donation of his own.

"Everybody has been so generous and supportive," said Nola Smith, a dance troupe member and a high school senior in Park Slope. "This woman did this to dozens of people. We knew we wouldn't be seeing our money by the time we needed it, so we were motivated to keep trying to raise money and so many people helped."



Dancewave Executive Director Diane Jacobowitz shows off the check for the stolen money that her lawyer recovered.  
Photo by Ted Levin