

## ENTERTAINMENT

# Taking the right steps

Arts showcase Kidz Take Kontrol will raise money for GroOops, a charity looking after children affected by emotional trauma. Francine Wolfisz reports

**M**ORE than 200 talented dancers will bring street to the stage on Saturday, as *Kidz Take Kontrol* arrives at the artsdepot in North Finchley.

Now in its fourth year, the show, which has now sold out, attracts dance troupes from London and beyond to raise funds for GroOops, a Finchley-based company that helps children, young people and their families cope with such life-changing events as bereavement, divorce, domestic violence and substance abuse.

Everything about the show, from producing programmes to organising rehearsals involves young people aged under 24. Hip hop choreographer Kymberlee Jay, director of Funk Physics and who has worked with Madonna and Nike, will comper the evening. Among the dance acts taking part are Vortex, Element, Flo'ography and Zoo Youth.

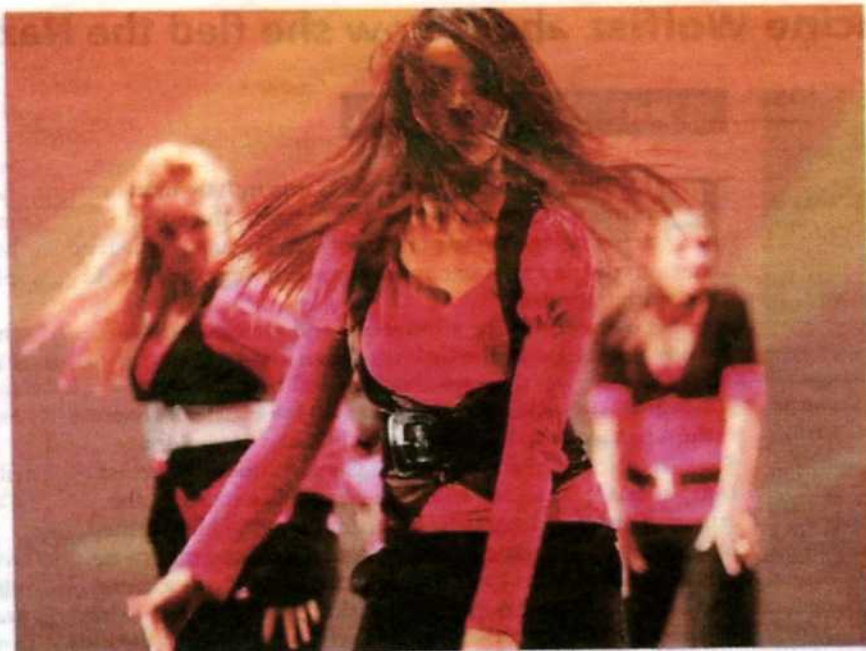
The show is actually the brainchild of Zoe-Ann Aston, 22, daughter of GroOops founder Pennie Aston, who will take part with her dance troupe, Interlude.

Pennie adds that the group hopes to raise at least £20,000 from the show, around a quarter of the charity's annual budget.

The much-needed funds are used to provide therapeutic groupwork and counselling using the arts, to help young people who are going through "tough times" to express their feelings in a healthy way.

Recognising that people of all ages can be affected by life difficulties, the three Os in the charity's name represent the child, the young person and the family.

Pennie herself knows how difficult it can be to face up to painful experiences without the correct support and guidance. She left school and home at 15 and her



Kidz Take Kontrol arrives at the artsdepot, North Finchley, on Saturday

grandfather committed suicide.

Then 25 years ago, she suffered another traumatic experience when her son, Luke, tragically died in a house fire just before his eighth birthday.

"Bereavement can have lifelong repercussions," says Pennie, "but I feel blessed to have had people in my life who have showed how you can turn very different life experiences into learning experiences. All too easily you can get crushed and scared to embrace life. It takes an enormous amount of courage."

Now dedicated to reaching out to young people, Pennie adds that GroOops has turned her life experiences into doing something positive. She explains: "I have a sense of wanting to put something back. It was very important that after Luke's death, it was not for no reason at all."

"His little life has actually impacted on hundreds of others and without him, none of these inspiring things would have happened."

● **Kidz Take Kontrol takes place on Saturday, May 9, 7.45pm, at artsdepot, Nether Street, North Finchley. Details: 020 8369 5454 or [www.artsdepot.co.uk](http://www.artsdepot.co.uk)**

