I attended Brown’s Summer program 2013. As a dancer for many years, I participated in close to 100 dance recitals. With each of those dance recitals comes a dance costume. After 10+ years of dancing, I have collected so many costumes that I thought what could I do with them? With the inspiration of the Brown Leadership program last year, I created an Action Plan to begin a foundation of collecting gently used costumes, dance attire and dance shoes, and donate them to those in need. Thus, the creation of DanceWithStyle.org!

The first thing I needed to do after the Action Plan was written was to take the name that I chose and see if it was available as a website and non-for-profit organization. Fortunately the name was available. I then had to apply with the State of Illinois as a non-for-profit for a small fee of $75. My father printed the application for me and completing it was very easy! I then worked with GoDaddy to purchase the domain name. GoDaddy had representatives to help me over the phone. I then worked with a neighbor of mine to create the website. This was all very exciting for me and felt like I was creating a business!

Once my website DanceWithStyle.org was up and running, I started to call several of the dance studios where I’ve danced before to see if I could solicit their dancers for donations. The best time to do it was in the spring because recitals all occur before the summer begins. I received great feedback immediately from several studios! By May, I created flyers for the studios to distribute to their dancers. I arranged to go to each recital to put up posters of when and where the donated items could be dropped off. At the end of each recital, they gave me an opportunity to address all families and dancers outlining my cause. The studios also sent out email blasts to the families reminding people of the times when I was going to be present to collect the donated items.

I collected more than 50 pairs of shoes and boxes and boxes of clothing attire! I had to determine where to donate the items to. I found an organization with young dancers. Next month, I’ll be going there to donate the items to the dancers.

I am very excited to be able to work with others to collect and provide the donated items. Those contributing to the cause are so happy to participate, and those accepting the items I’m sure will be grateful. It’s a win-win situation for all!

I was a little nervous as to who would donate but many people stepped up. Also, because the dance studios gave me the ability to create flyers, put them up, and make those announcements at the recitals, it really drew a crowd.

What I learned most about myself is that I’m proud I motivated people to be willing to help. I would tell my story and vision of the charity and people were willing to assist with getting me started. Then once DanceWithStyle.org was created, it all came into place because people are willing to participate.

Creating a charity in something that is of interest is what makes it fun. I suggest to others that should they want to make a difference, do it with something you are familiar with and something you enjoy to do. Therefore, it makes it enjoyable to continue.

In the fall, I will be working with several studios to continue collecting dance attire, especially shoes and basic dancewear so that I can support the charities I found to be interested in needing the items. I also
will be creating a Facebook page for DanceWithStyle.org so that I can post updates and announcements. I will continue to solicit dancers from other studios and in the Fall, I will be working with several studios to continue collecting dance attire, especially shoes and basic dancewear so that I can support the charities I found to be interested in needing the items. I also will be creating a Facebook page for DanceWithStyle.org so that I can post updates and announcements. I will continue to solicit help from dancers from other studios, and find additional charities to make the donations to.

It’s been a year since my Brown experience and I can’t believe that with a little effort and time commitment, I am able to help those in need, all with motivation which started from my basic Action Plan!