

## Inner-city teens get step on new year

By Jessica Fargen

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Think New Year's Eve, you think fireworks, champagne and dancing.

“Mostly, the kids in BalletRox think of dancing.

BalletRox, a dance troupe of mostly inner-city teens, was one of hundreds of groups that performed yesterday at Hynes Convention Center as a part of First Night.

“It’s for kids that really can’t afford it,” said Cyrus Brooks, a 16-year-old dancer and student at City Roots-South Boston. “It keeps them from getting into bad things.”

BalletRox provides 30 scholarships each year for inner-city, at-risk kids to attend a Boston arts school.

About 20 teens performed dance numbers yesterday, including a few bits from their show “Urban Nutcracker.” By the second and last show, more than 400 people were in chairs or standing in the back of a large ballroom in the convention center.

Audience members got on stage to learn tap, ballet and hip-hop dance moves.

“Kick, step, step,” a dancer named Lorenzo told the crowd during a tap number.

Anthony Williams, director of BalletRox, said dancers come from the School of Dance in Jamaica Plain or the Boston Arts Academy. Williams said the performance group, which practices most nights after school, gives students self-esteem and confidence.

“You feel good about yourself,” Williams said. “You are not out on the streets getting in trouble.”

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## GALLERY



'Ballet Rox' dancers teach kids some of their moves at the Hynes. (Staff photo by Ted Fitzgerald)