*Biography: Jill Maree Thomasson*

*Mrs. Jill Thomasson began her dance training at age five studying ballet, tap, jazz and modern dance through the Howard County Gifted and Talented Dance program in Columbia, Maryland. In 1985, she represented the United States in the 3rd “Children’s Banner of Peace” Assembly held in Sofia Bulgaria. Her choreography was presented during the festival and received recognition from the Bulgarian Press.*

*In 1988, Jill received a Creative and Performing Arts full-tuition scholarship and the Maryland Distinguished Scholar Award for the Arts. Studying with notable modern dance companies (Paul Taylor, Alwin Nikolais/Murray Louis and Martha Graham), Hip Hop and Tap artists at Broadway Dance Center in New York City, while dancing professionally with the Baltimore Dance Theater for fifteen years, Jill completed her BA in Dance from the University of Maryland College Park, graduating Magna Cum Laude. Jill pursued additional degrees at Towson State University after receiving the Maryland Distinguished Teacher Education Award and the MAPHERD Outstanding Student Award. Graduating Summa Cum Laude with a BS & K-12 certifications in Dance, Physical Education and Weight Training, Jill began teaching dance full-time in the Howard County Public School System. Jill started the dance program at River Hill High School developing five levels of dance (Intro, Intermediate, Advanced, Junior Company and Senior Company) with over 125 students within the first two years. Creating and presenting Bi-Annual Winter and Spring Dance Concerts, Jill also had her students perform in county and state dance festivals as well as DisneyWorld and on several cruise ships (Cozumel and Bahamas).*

*While teaching full-time, Jill completed a Post-Baccalaureate Pre-Med program through Johns Hopkins and Towson University and started her own dance studio, FootPrints/Blizzard Dance Studio, where she was co-owner and teacher for fifteen years in the evenings. Jill was elected Vice-President of dance in the state of Maryland, publishing several articles for her professional organization, MAHPERD, and presenting at numerous local and state conferences.*

*Moving to Pennsylvania in 2008, Jill has been employed full-time teaching and choreographing at the Milton Hershey School for the Middle and Senior Divisions in numerous capacities: Praise Dance Director, Musical Choreographer (Peter Pan, 18,000 Voices, Big River, Godspell, Hairspray, Sadaku, Willie Wonka and the Chocolate Factory Jr, Guys and Dolls Jr, Beauty and the Beast Jr, Thoroughly Modern Millie Jr, Aladdin Jr, Lion King Jr, The Little Mermaid Jr, and Mary Poppins Jr), Middle Division Director of the Advanced Dance After-School Programming and Exploratory Dance Educator at Middle Division. Jill is a tenacious advocate for dance as she continuously strives to provide top-notch programming and opportunities for students who are passionate about dance.*

*In 2020, Jill launched ExHaLTT Dance Company into the Elizabethtown Area to provide a Christian alternative for students looking for “faith-based” dance education. She currently teaches multiple comprehensive dance courses to ALL age groups (pre-school through adult). A typical class includes: a fun warm-up (locomotor game/exercises), followed by sequential stretching to prepapre the body for technical ballet/modern center-floor instruction that flows into across-the-floor movement patterns. Students change into tap shoes for rhythmic and fine-motor instruction, changing one last time into sneakers for some vigorous and exciting Hip Hop/Jazz combinations ALL IN ONE CLASS!*

*Jill’s ultimate goal, creating a performing arts school where students will receive excellent instruction in the diverse creative arts (art, dance, drama, instrumental and vocal music), with the emphasis on glorifying God, became a reality in January 2023. ExHaLTT Performing Arts Academy became a non-profit, 501c(3), organization and is extremely blessed to be in their new home in the center of Elizabethtown. Jill believes wholeheartedly “Where the Arts Thrive, the Soul Comes Alive” and is excited to teach each child that enters her academy to ExHaLTT the Lord through dance by “Expressing Hearts and Lives To Touch!”* [*www.exhalttdancecompany.org*](http://www.exhalttdancecompany.org)