



## Riverwoods businesswoman supports the arts, Russian culture

By [Anna Marie Kukec](#)

Little did Aleksandra Efimova know that taking piano and ballet lessons as a child growing up in St. Petersburg, Russia, would lead to a home at Riverwoods, participation as a director on several arts-related boards, and ownership of her own businesses in Chicago.

Efimova had attended the Art School at the Hermitage State Art Museum, studying the arts, including classical ballet. She later emigrated to the United States, settling in Michigan in 1993 at age 15. She was eager to live in a big city and picked Chicago.

"It has beauty and wonderful architecture and is an inspirational city," she said. "I looked at a map of the United States and saw Chicago and decided to move here."

About five years later, she founded her first business, Russian Pointe, which makes and sells ballet shoes. That has since become a boutique store on Michigan Avenue in Chicago. The shoes are sold to about 300 outlets and some ballet companies, she said.

In addition, she has started another company called Growing Through Arts, which aims to help children learn more about the arts with books, toys and games. She has released her book called "Sleeping Beauty Ballet," which is part of a line of books aimed at teaching the arts to children.

"I am a very strong believer in education," she said, "and especially education for kids. It helps them to succeed in life and teaches them how to use the arts as a platform for discipline."

She's also launched Russian Culture Now, a nonprofit that increases awareness of the Russian culture.

Efimova has served on the auxiliary board of the Joffrey Ballet and the Junior Board of the Auditorium Theatre in Chicago. Former Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley also appointed her as co-chair of the Moscow Committee of Chicago Sister Cities International and she serves as chair of Sen. Mark Kirk's newly formed Russian and Eastern European Advisory Board.

Her own website at [www.Aleksandra.com](http://www.Aleksandra.com) has a newsletter, a blog, photos for social events she's attended and any number of organizations where she's involved.

And throughout it all, she aims to grow each of her businesses this year.

"We'll be growing through the arts," she said.