

# The Patriot-News

## TAP-DANCING CLASS PUTS FEET IN MOTION

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Vicki Riordan can show your toes a darned good time.

Young or old, svelte or gawky, limp or full of bounce, if you give the tap dancing teacher a few hours of your time . . . well, you've never seen so many happy feet in one room.

A dance instructor for West Shore Recreation and Leisure Services for 10 years, Riordan added a tap dancing class to her act in January.

Now West Shore is trying to keep pace with the skittering, black-clad toes lined up every week in Highland Elementary School's cafeteria in Lower Allen Twp., where Riordan is turning homemakers, professionals and retirees into dancers.

'Pull-hop, kick-hop, pull-hop, shuffle step! Remember, you're going to pull with that toe. No heels this time . . . I don't want to hear heels!

By the the end of the first four-class program, demand has led to an encore of six more sessions for 13 of the 19 participants. Still not satisfied, 12 of those 13 have talked West Shore Recreation into a May 7 to June 4 extension.

That includes a spry Gloria Stewart, 70, of Fairview Twp., and Agnes Freeland, 78, of Upper Allen Twp.

'I'll never be the star of the show, but I love it,' Freeland said.

The average age of the class is 50 -- Riordan herself is 50. Most of the students say they're revisiting a childhood love or dream.

'I was a little girl when Shirley Temple was a little girl, and I've just never outgrown it,' Stewart said.

And Riordan's non-threatening, confidence-building approach brings them back, they say.'

Shuffle jump tap . . . Whooh! Very, very nice. Head up. Smile -- think about what you're feet are doing! Dance from your knees down.

'It's a lot harder than it looks,' said Patty Witte, 42, of New Cumberland.

It was the grand confession. Just 30 minutes earlier, Witte had said she didn't need to slow the whole group down to learn a new step she missed from the last class.

'That's OK, I'll pick it up quickly,' she said.

Her classmates cracked up. This is not the do-si-do you learned in sixth-grade gym class. It's the 'Shuffle off to Buffalo.' Or clickety-click clacking to Rod Stewart's raspy voice blaring from a boom box: '

## Feet In Motion

We're having a party, everybody's swinging, dancing to the music . . . me and my baby.'

Many were sweating, lined up at the water fountain, halfway through class.

'It's good exercise,' said Carmen Suter Williams, West Shore's director, who is herself hooked on the class.

'Everybody was in the same boat here. I would be somewhat intimidated going into a dance studio and saying, 'I've never danced before,'" she said.

As it was, the novice class was so energized that, after only four lessons, they wanted to take their show on tour at local nursing homes.

'I said, 'We'll have a recital when we're all in a size six,'" Riordan joked.

'Sa-LAP paddle turn, ball-change, ball-change! Are your ankles loose? They've got to be loose!

Riordan, of Upper Allen Twp., started dancing at 3. She ran Vicki's Studio of Rhythm in Steelton in the 1960s and has taught in New Orleans, Queens and New Jersey.

'I get a second wind when I see their enthusiasm. We feed off each other. It's almost like a family,' she said.

It's a family of 12 women and one man.

Bert Zumoff, 61, of Lemoyne, casts aside the gender stereotypes. He got into dancing after a trip to Spain -- in particular one evening at a shoreside hotel.

'This French guy came over and asked my wife to dance. My wife loved to dance. I figured I'd better learn,' he said.

'I'm interested in motion and grace. It's a form of expressing oneself,' Zumoff said. 'The ultimate is when the music becomes a part of you . . . it's sort of in your blood.' Close your eyes during Riordan's class and the tapping can build up to a pulsating locomotive, then fade to the pitter-patter of rain on a rooftop.

'Everybody likes to make noise,' Riordan said. 'But the noise turns into something that's music to your ears.'

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