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## Folk dancing club in Clark County offers healthy fun

International Folk Dancing Club helps participants get in emotional and physical shape

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Every week on Tuesday from 3-4:15 p.m. people over the age of 50 have the opportunity to take part in something for free that they might just fall in love with for the rest of their life. The activity is folk dancing, and it takes place at the Marshall Center in Vancouver.

Leader of the folk dancing club is Kenneth Dewire. Some 60 years ago he said his passion for it was developed unexpectedly, similarly to many of the first timers to his International Folk Dancing Club.

Dewire was born in Wisconsin and raised in New York. After acquiring an education from Syracuse University he said he came out west to “seek my fortune.” Dewire eventually landed in Idaho, working for a company that was constructing a TV station. One weekend he said an old girlfriend drug him over to Richland, Washington, for a folk dancing festival of sorts. Reluctantly he made the trip, but today admits he owes that woman a lot.



Folk dancing club members halt their circle dance to pose for a picture.

Photos courtesy of Kenneth Dewire



Photo courtesy of Kenneth Dewire

**Kenneth Dewire leads a Japanese peace dance called "Believe."**



“I got hooked,” Dewire said.

At 86 years old Dewire knows folk dancing like the back of his hand. He’s performed and done demonstrations all over the world and enjoys teaching people the art.

“It takes your mind off of everything and is a bit of a challenge,” he said.

Dewire’s local Tuesday club is specifically labeled “international folk dancing.” He knows about 50 different dances that originate from many countries and include styles of lines, circles, sets, squares and mixers. A few examples from his repertoire re: “Patti Cake Polka” a Polish couples mixer, “Lech Lamidar,” an Israeli circle, and “Robin Ddiog,” an English line.

Tom Halpenny, a regular attendee of the folk dancing club from Ridgefield, said Dewire does a great job each week of selecting dances to do in the class that will fit well with who’s there and what their capabilities are. Halpenny said none are too tough to pick and get down.

“It’s mostly just a feeling,” said Halpenny on the movements of folk dancing. “Basically there’s a footwork to everything and you kinda just go from there.”

Halpenny believes the biggest hurdle is just simply giving it a try. By doing so he said this “lifelong activity” will make you healthier.

“There’s so many healthy aspects to it, and it doesn’t even feel like much effort,” he said. Beside just gaining some physical exercise that isn’t overbearing, Halpenny additionally adds that folk dancing stimulates an emotional part of the brain.

“There’s also the social aspect in the dances with partners or groups. It’s a great way to meet people,” he said.

As for the physical benefits, Halpenny can’t deny the results he’s gained from dancing every week.

“I just turned 65 and I’m in the best shape I’ve been in. I owe that to folk dancing.”

To learn more about the International Folk Dancing Club in Clark County email [kendew@gmail.com](mailto:kendew@gmail.com) or Call 360-216-6264. Newcomers are free of charge, after that the cost is only \$1.