

Stepping into the fun

Wild Rose Ramblers offers square dance lessons for all



COLIN MULVANY/THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW Rob Krum calls to dancers on Nov. 12 during a square dance class at the Wild Rose Ramblers Square Dancing Club. Krum has been calling square dances for 34 years.



Wild Rose Ramblers Square Dancing Club has members from their mid-20s into their 80s. Tuesday nights they offer lessons and they host dances the first Saturday of each month.

BY CINDY HVAL FOR THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

Tuesday nights at the North Spokane Dance Center might be square, but they sure are fun – and usually, there’s an angelic visitation.

That’s when the Wild Rose Ramblers Square Dance Club hosts its weekly lessons. Most dancers on a recent evening had started lessons in September and were well past their do-si-dos but not quite to their California Twirls.

“Angels” are experienced dancers who show up on Tuesday nights to shepherd beginners along their Allemande rights and lefts. Regular club dances are on the first Saturday of the month, from 7-10 p.m.

“We’re one of 14 square dancing clubs in the area,” Karol Hoffman said. “Square dancing is not like what you might have done in grade school – it’s evolved into more fun and entertaining dances for all ages.”

It’s also the official state dance of Washington.

Founded in 1970, Wild Rose Ramblers has about 40 members who range in age from their mid- 20s to their early 80s.

Hoffman said she and her husband Ron joined the group in 2005 at the urging of Ron’s sister and a neighbor who told him there’d be ice cream at the dance.

“He went for the ice cream, and I came along.”

Ron Hoffman nodded.

“The people are friendly, and it’s fun.”

It’s also good for your mind and body.

“Doctors recommend square dancing for dementia and Alzheimer’s because of the repetition,” Karol Hoffman said.

Rob Krum calls the dances for the club.

“I’ve been a caller for 34 years,” he said. “The caller is like a cheerleader at a football game.”

The caller chooses the music, and the dancers follow his calls.

“You have to keep track of the people and get them back to their partner,” he said.

Krum said there are 63 moves in square dancing – 49 basic moves and 17 mainstream.

“We just teach the basic moves at the classes.”

While the number of moves might seem intimidating, Karol Hoffman said they aren’t difficult to learn.

“It’s easy to learn to dance,” she said. “You have to know your right from

your left, and then it's basically walking.”

Cindi Pierce said she and her husband started the classes in September.

“We've been wanting to do it since we moved here three years ago,” she said. “It's good exercise.”

While some couples attend together, solo dancers are also welcome.

“There is always someone to dance with, so you don't have to worry about not having a partner,” Karol Hoffman said.

Darby Forsberg has been dancing since 1977 and attends with her son Drake. When her husband was hospitalized following a serious car accident, she said her son promised his dad that he would be her square dance partner.

She enjoys helping new dancers.

“They get here and realize just how much fun it is,” Forsberg said.

Barbara Melis said she and her husband joined the club in the '80s.

“Everybody smiles and has a good time,” she said. “You make a lot of lifelong friends.”

Many members socialize outside the dance hall. They travel together and share meals. Some of the trips include attending national and state square dance festivals.

New attendees don't need to worry about dressing up in circle skirts with petticoats or Western shirts with bolo ties.

“You don't need to wear the outfit all the time or dress up,” Karol said. “You can come in shorts, blue jeans, or everyday clothes. If someone wants to join the club, we help them with the outfits.”

She said guests are always welcome at the dances, whether they're experienced dancers or just want to come and watch.

Dancers usually pay a suggested \$10 donation, but nondancers don't pay anything.

The next round of lessons starts in January, and the Wild Rose Ramblers hope

lots of people will attend.

“Come as you are,” Karol Hoffman said. “It’s a great way to get out of the house, have fun and meet new friends.

For more information about Wild Rose Ramblers visit squaredancespokane.org/wild-rose-ramblers.

For information about other area Square Dance clubs visit squaredancespokane.org.

Cindy Hval can be reached at dchval@juno.com.

Special Interest Groups

In this series, we celebrate special interest groups. Whether you get together to play tennis, board games, take long walks, eat lunch, create art, connect with your neighbors or gather with friends, nothing is too small to celebrate. Please share your story with us by emailing Cindy Hval at dchval@juno.com or call Kimberly Lusk at (509) 459-5457.