

Drawing the Past to the Present through Music and Dance

Senior dance program supports healthy community

Dance draws out an expression of self, while creating exercise for the mind and body. Through dance, we are filled with the energy of celebration. As we age, dancing becomes even more important to preserve and improve muscle function, increase stability and reduce injuries. For over 40 years, the Basin Street Regulars (BSR) in Pismo Beach have designed programs to foster a passion for music and dancing for seniors. Recently, with the support of The Community Foundation San Luis Obispo County, the BSR has expanded traditional jazz music programs as seniors dance the afternoon away to the era of songs they love the most.

The Basin Street Regulars was created in the late 1970s with the mission to preserve, promote and provide an opportunity to listen and dance to traditional jazz, first popular in the 1920s and 1930s. Today, BSR provides high-quality musical entertainment targeted to senior citizens. Now, with more than 300 members, the BSR holds a jazz concert the last Sunday of each month, where seniors gather, play music, listen to a professional guest band and dance to their heart's content as they reminisce about the past, enjoy the present and strengthen for the future.



“Previously, financial needs were primarily supported through membership fees and a few small donations,” said LaDean Talcott, member and volunteer at BSR; however, this funding alone limited their opportunities. In 2017, BSR member Tom Dutart learned of a grant that was made available for nonprofit organizations that focused on senior dancing. BSR was awarded the additional funding which has allowed for the hiring of bands that resonate with the senior crowd, and the ability to help more seniors learn about the music and dance programs.

“It’s so important for seniors to remain active,” said Talcott as she reviewed a variety of health benefits dancing promotes. “Once you become physically active, research has shown that you are more likely to engage in other healthy behaviors, including keeping up with medication, engaging in social activities, and eating a nutritious diet; all of which will improve your quality of life and health as you age. It brings such joy to watch our seniors socialize, make new friends, dance and be happy. It’s truly heartwarming to watch.”

Dancing is so contagious, that many members have spent decades in the Basin Street Regulars. Long-time musician, Frank Coop, has been involved in BSR for over 20 years playing electric guitar, banjo and ukulele. "Frank is 93-years-old and is not only a great musician but an excellent dancer," said Talcott. "He is a regular attendee at our senior dances and at our annual Jubilee."

Linda Dutart, the wife of the late Tom Dutart, is a 30-year member of BSR. Linda and her husband began supporting BSR in the 80s and joined as members in 2005. Tom became President of BSR in 2006 and Linda, with her skills as a secretary and bookkeeper, served on the BSR board. Over the years, Linda has filled various volunteer positions, and at age 80, she continues to attend the monthly concerts as



well as carry out the responsibilities of being treasurer of the annual Jazz Jubilee. "When I reflect on our almost 30 years of involvement with BSR," said Linda, "I know that what Tom and I valued most was the enjoyment of the music and the many lifelong friendships we made. If you enjoy jazz music, BSR monthly concerts and the annual Jubilee are great places to listen, to socialize and to dance."

"We want to keep our local senior citizens active and healthy," said Talcott, as she was smiling thinking of all the wonderful members she has had the opportunity to get to know in BSR. "The senior community in this area lacks affordable events where they can dance to live bands, eat and socialize with people from all ages. It is a true joy to be a part of this program and see the benefits of working with an organization like The Community Foundation."

The Community Foundation is proud to be part of a program that values local seniors and helps them maintain their health through the joys of dance. Basin Street Regulars is the only senior dance program in San Luis Obispo County, and they are extremely grateful for all the support they have received.