



You may know Nancy Gillespie from dance classes or the choir at New Covenant United Methodist Church, but what you may not know is that she started a pre-school and kindergarten dance program for college students' kids.



Bill Mitchell | Daily Sun

GETTING TO KNOW NANCY GILLESPIE

Village: Calumet Grove
Spouse: Dick
Family: 3 children, 7 grandchildren, 1 great-grandson on the way
Moved Here In: 2003
Moved Here From: Butler, Pennsylvania
Favorite Villages Activities: Taking tap and lyrical jazz classes, gardening, painting eggs and singing



Kristen Fiore

THE VILLAGES DAILY SUN

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When Nancy Gillespie thinks of her childhood in Lyndora, Pennsylvania, she remembers the smells of her uncle's sauerkraut and her grandmother's stuffed cabbage, pierogis and paska. She remembers playing in the snow, helping her mother in the garden and dancing.

There always has been a lot of dancing in Gillespie's life.

When she was a kid, she and her siblings learned Ukrainian dancing.

"Some of the steps are like tap in a way," said Gillespie, of the Village of Calumet Grove. Her enjoyment of Ukrainian dance led her to take tap and ballet classes, and she danced frequently in Pittsburgh, eventually making her way up to the status of prima ballerina.

"I loved it, but it ruined my feet," Gillespie chuckled.

For Gillespie, dance was something that made her happy, and it was a way to meet new friends.

In high school, Gillespie was a cheerleader, majorette and a frequent dancer and singer in shows like "Finian's Rainbow," "Guys and Dolls" and more.

"To this day, I still have a lot of the costumes," Gillespie said. "Top hats, bright yellow (garments)."

She met her husband, Dick, when she was in high school. "We started going out and got married," Nancy said. "I maybe went out with one other guy before him and that was it."

Around the time she graduated high school, she developed

a program called Nancy Gillespie's Creative Dance Aerobics and spent six days a week teaching classes.

She still stays in touch with former students, including one woman who has had multiple strokes but still dances at the YMCA from her wheelchair.

Nancy also got a college degree in early childhood education.

"I was proud, because at that time I was married and had a few children," she said. "I graduated summa cum laude."

When Butler County Community College opened, Nancy started a pre-school and kindergarten program for the college students' kids. As director, she organized both programs, worked with the teachers and

played with the kids.

She retired after 30 years.

While dancing, singing and teaching are obvious passions in Nancy's life, she has another one, too: Ukrainian eggs, or pysanky.

She learned about the ornately painted eggs in a copy of National Geographic when she was a kid and started making her own.

It's been around seven decades since then, and she's still making eggs.

"I've made a couple thousand and I've given a lot away," Nancy said. "I still probably have close to a thousand, and they're displayed all over the house."

Nancy likes to modernize the eggs by adorning them with scraps of doilies and plenty of glitter. She paints flowers,

butterflies and other designs on them.

"I always like to have a heart and a cross on my eggs," she said.

Her egg-painting skills have translated to painting rocks as well.

Nancy and Dick moved to The Villages in 2003, after visiting friends who had moved here and falling in love with it.

Nancy continues to stay busy by dancing, singing, painting eggs and gardening.

She takes dance classes three times a week and sings in the New Covenant United Methodist Church choir, often as a soloist.

Nancy also enjoys performing at assisted living facilities and parties.

"It just makes people so happy," she said.

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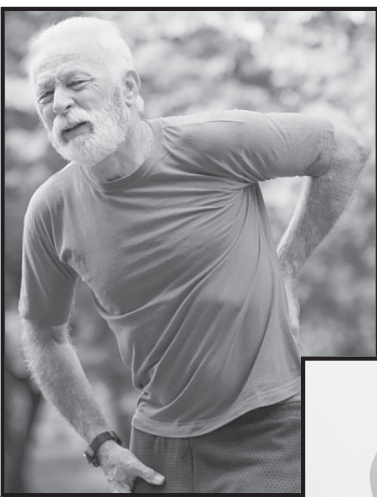
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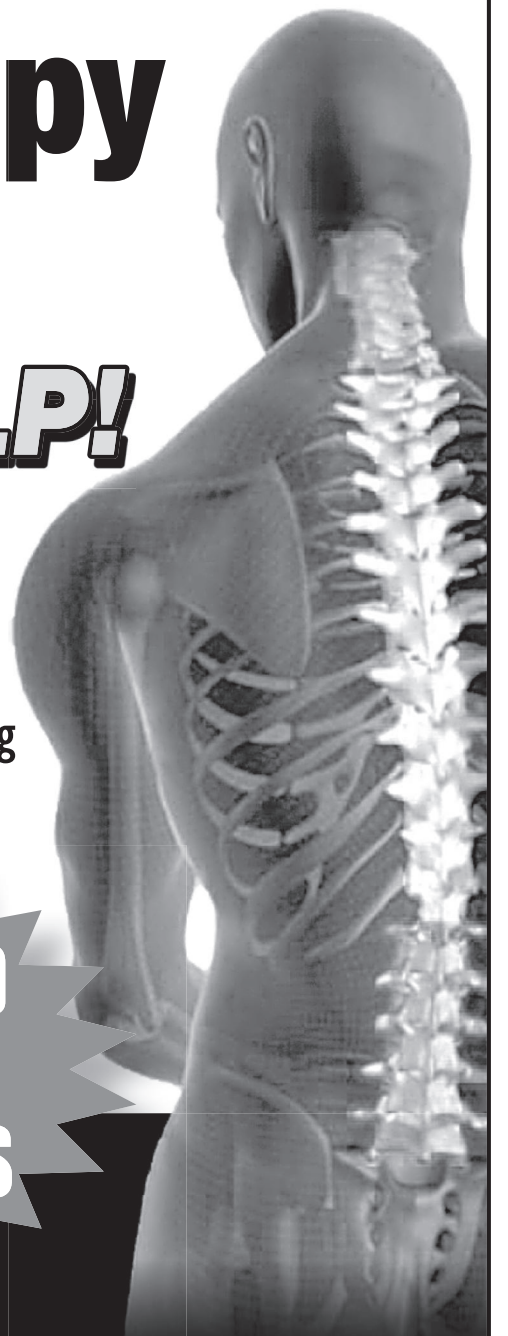
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