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Finding Balance: Movement and Motion at Any Age

By Amanda Kuehn



Advanced Balance Class instructor Esther Wetzel (left, red shirt) with her students. Photo Amanda Kuehn

abilities in her students. "Everybody deals with something," she noted. "Everybody is different."

"Esther's classes provide an interesting, ever changing variety of techniques to enhance one's balance, posture and visual acuity," said class member Charlotte Dethero.

"She is beyond wonderful!" exclaimed Dethero's neighbor, Ginnie Menezes. "Although I hate to exercise I decided to attend a class. A year and a half later, I still don't like to exercise, but class with Esther is so much fun, the ladies I've met so delightful and diverse, I actually look forward to going."

"Esther has absolutely changed my life," said Lone Gille. "She knows each of our shortcomings and works with us." Classes are small - 4-6 people - in an effort to make sure students receive personal attention. "My favorite part of the class is Esther's ability to gently and humorously push us to improve," said Menezes. "We have absolute trust that she knows what she is doing."

A major goal of the classes is to train members to be alert, to keep themselves from injury and practice catching themselves. They also, "laugh and joke and dance and amaze ourselves," as Menezes put it.

Wetzel recognizes that the social aspect of the class is both healing and rejuvenating. "We laugh at ourselves a lot," she remarked. "What our bodies do and what they don't do. Sometimes the ladies say that's what they really come for - to laugh."

Dethero couldn't agree more. "We have a good time," she noted. "I never want to miss a class."

Wetzel teaches balance classes Wednesdays from 1 to 2 p.m. at the Lafayette Dance and Movement Center and on Mondays and Thursdays from 12:15 to 1:15 p.m. at Lafayette Physical Therapy. Classes are \$20 per session. Contact Wetzel at esterwetznel@yahoo.com or (925) 262-3155.

Beginning Balance Classes are also offered through Lafayette Physical Therapy. For more details or to arrange a pre-class screening call (925) 284-6150.

It was 2 p.m. last Wednesday and the senior members of Esther Wetzel's Advanced Balance Class had just finished with their hour of mental and physical exercise when this reporter walked in to the Lafayette Dance and Movement Center. "Oh, you should have been here a few minutes ago!" said Wetzel. "We were passing beanbags with our hands and playing soccer with our feet."

"Yes, you missed a good laugh," added a smiling woman with cropped white hair. Three other ladies nodded in agreement.

Originally from Switzerland, with a master's degree in physical therapy and a keen interest in people, Wetzel is an ideal instructor for this motley crew.

"Movement is always very exciting to me," she said. Having given up physical therapy to raise her children when she moved to the States in 1990, Wetzel began looking for ways to use her skills and expertise about five years ago. She found just that at Lafayette Physical Therapy.

Wetzel has a particular interest in working with geriatrics. "It's special to help them keep their independence," she remarked. Wetzel takes continuing education classes on senior fitness and makes an effort to engage all parts of the brain, accessing different senses and

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