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Ballroom Dancing

Like you've always
imagined . . .



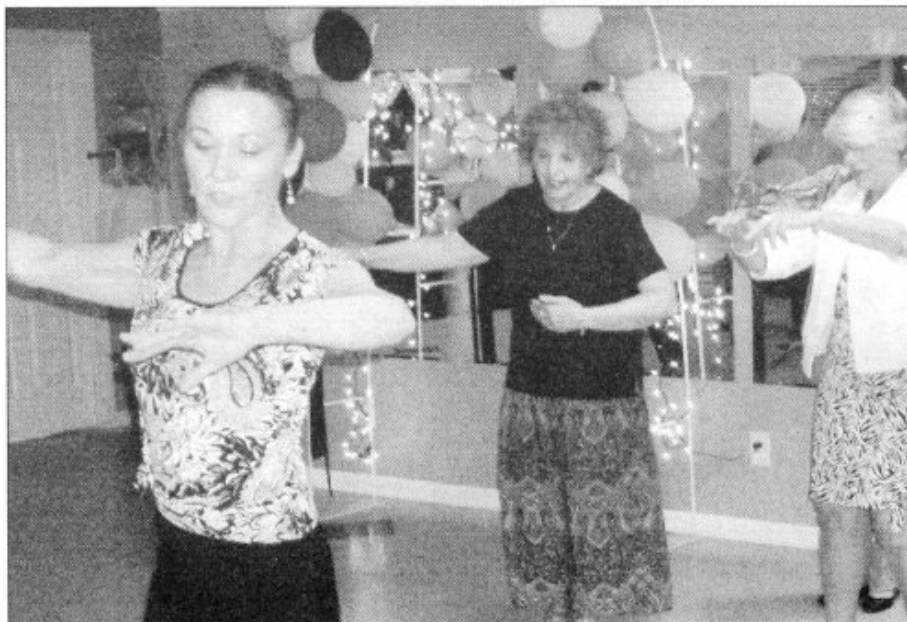
WEEK OF MAY 13 - 19, 2010

**The
County
Compass**

360 Degrees of News Coverage

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Couple's guidance makes ballroom maneuvers easy



Penny instructs the ladies

JEFF AYDELETTE
Staff Writer

BAYBORO -- Ballroom dancing in the large facility seemed less intimidating – and less demanding -- than seen on TV as five couples, ranging in age from 50 to upper 80s, enjoyed three hours of gentle instruction and encouragement from a pair of polished performers.

John and Penny DeFino love their avocation. In recent months they have become well-known local advocates for the sport, touting not only its physical benefits but also the pizzazz and glamour made famous by Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers.

After all, who was the wag that once said: "Sure he (Fred Astaire) was great, but don't forget – Ginger Rogers did everything he did backwards . . . and in high heels."

That fact of life is really driven home in a DeFino handout.

"There is a pecking order," blares the single page of tips and pointers. "The lady follows the man. The man follows the music."

At the Bay River Commons office complex, John and Penny teach their craft every Wednesday. And, on the first Friday of every month, the site takes on a festive air as couples practice what they have learned.

"They are great teachers," said Jo Ann Middlebrook, who attends regularly with her husband Brian. "But you really do

have to practice."

John typically works with the guys in one part of the room while Penny does the same with the gals. Then, the couples reunite as John pushes the remote control on his CD player to call up any one of a hundred different tunes.

A quick glance at the playlist indicates familiar terms – Waltz, ChaCha, Foxtrot, Salsa, Rumba, Tango, even the Viennese Waltz – though the actual steps are but a fuzzy image to the uninitiated.

Any unfamiliarity won't last long. John and Penny are committed to spreading the gospel of ballroom dancing.

"Keep in mind, we take lessons too," said John. "We have our own coaches, and our coaches have their own coaches."

One thing is for sure. With this activity, forget the books.

As the men practiced twirling their partners, Paul Henry had an 'a-ha moment' as wife Melody came out of a slightly convoluted spin.

"I was trying to go under her," laughed Henry, "but she's got to go under me."

And, of course, there's the twinkle, the promenade, and the halo. Let's refer again to that trusty handout:

Don't criticize your partner's mistake: Try to analyze what you did wrong to cause your partner's seeming fault. Then, brainstorm ways to improve the next time.

"We are very fortunate in this area to have a number of great places to dance and some fine instructors," said John. "A

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John and Penny DeFino

couple of these are Rivertowne Ballroom in New Bern and Crystal Coast Ballroom in Morehead City. We go to these places as well. Whether people come to BayRiver Ballroom or go elsewhere, we are thrilled watching them enjoy what we enjoy about Ballroom Dancing."

One gets the impression that future recruitment will be a cakewalk – or is that a Tango? For more information, call (252) 349-0225 or visit www.BayRiverBallroom.com.



John coaches the guys.