

# THE WCR LEARNING COMMUNITY

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Photos courtesy of Adrian MacNair  
**Children and elders exercise with walkers.**

Adapted from the *Mission City Record*

## **Save the next dance for me**

Level 3

Lee Kwidzinski wanted to help her father. Since she is a dance teacher, she decided to teach him to dance. Later, when he moved into the Pleasant View Care Home in Mission, she decided to teach the other residents as well.

### **This class is different**

Then Kwidzinski had an idea. Three years ago she added children to the dance class in the care home. She thought the children and elders could learn together.

### **Lessons to learn**

Seven Grade Two and Three girls at E.S. Richards Elementary School (ESR) came to the new class. Two other schools had also been part of the program. Starting in January, the ESR girls and elders learned ballet and movement. The children had not done ballet before coming to this program. Once a week for an hour, the children and elders worked together. Before each class, the girls went in to say good morning to each resident. Then the residents worked on strength and balance. The girls worked on dance skills.

### **Children's ideas**

Kwidzinski said young children are more open with seniors. These children don't have the same ideas about age as other people do. Kwidzinski asked the girls, "...how old is old?" They had interesting answers. One of the girls said 30. Another said 100.

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Photos courtesy of Adrian MacNair  
**Young dancer and elder  
exercising with wheelchair.**

### **The best lessons**

The best part for the elders was working with these young people.

Some of the youngsters were a little afraid at first.

They thought they might hurt the seniors.

The girls learned about **empathy** and **compassion**. And they learned to understand their elders.

The children could not learn these things sitting at a desk.

The classes were full of joy.

In the six months, deep **bonds** developed between the students and elders.

### **How did the elders dance?**

The elders danced and moved to the best of their ability.

Many seniors did the exercises from wheelchairs.

Others stood with a little help from the girls. Some elders just **swayed** to the music. Some seniors did exercises at the ballet barre. Some young dancers used the wheelchairs or walkers as ballet barres. Just like the elders.

### **Interest in the program**

The University of the Fraser Valley (UFV) is making a film about the program.

Three years ago, Shelley Canning saw the elders and children in a concert at a theatre.

Canning, a nursing instructor at UFV, knew the program was very special.

Now she wants to write about the program in a science journal.



Photos courtesy of Adrian MacNair  
**Sharing a hug after the lesson.**

### **You can dance**

Local community centers have dance programs for all levels and interests.

You can learn ballroom dancing, square dancing, belly dancing and more. Shall we dance?

(Vocabulary and Links on the next page)

## **Vocabulary:**

- **empathy:** the ability to understand the thoughts and feelings of another
- **compassion:** able to understand the suffering of others and wanting to help
- **bonds:** emotional connections or ties with another person
- **swayed:** moved from side to side; or backward and forward

## **What people say about dance:**

*If you can walk, you can dance. If you can talk, you can sing.*

Proverb from Zimbabwe, Africa

*To watch us dance is to hear our hearts speak.*

Hopi Indian saying

*We're fools whether we dance or not, so we might as well dance.*

Japanese proverb

*The body says what words cannot.*

Martha Graham

## **Links:**

Watch a video on the program:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s4BjHHYxrI>