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Dance the night away

■ A local ballroom dance group encourages everyone to join in the fun of its Halloween dance



By Monica Hande
Oregon Daily Emerald

Imagine a few ghosts, pumpkins and witches doing the Samba. Now, imagine about 50 or 60 of them on the dance floor. That is what the Eugene/Springfield chapter of the United States Amateur Ballroom Dancers Association is expecting Sunday night.

Each second Sunday of the month, the local USABDA chapter holds a ballroom dance, which is open to the public. This month's theme is Halloween, and Jim Rice, the chapter's vice president, encourages dancers to appear in costume.

"The more people who have the courage to dress up, the more atmosphere it creates," he said.

In fact, at some time during the dance, judging will occur for a costume contest, although Rice said he wasn't yet sure what the prize would be.

Established in part by its current president, Ben Moseley, the local USABDA chapter is relatively new. Its first dance was held in December, and it became recognized as an official chapter four months ago when membership reached a minimum of 25. Now, membership is up to about 45, Moseley said.

"I'm excited to see the chapter growing," he said. However, he admitted that it's still somewhat difficult to get everything accomplished when the organization works solely on a volunteer basis. He said a larger membership would be helpful.

"The biggest thing is member support," he said. "It's a viral thing. It spreads."

And the monthly dances are what encourage the spread and, as Moseley counts on, attract membership.

About 50 to 60 people usually attend the dances, Rice said, and usually more than half of those people are non-members. The dances are

Getting involved

To learn more about the United States Amateur Ballroom Dancers Association, call its hotline at 544-0541, or visit its Web site, at www.accessdance.com/eugusabda

open to everyone, and Rice encourages dancers of all experience levels to attend and to become members.

"We have dancers who are 14 years old and those who are 84 years old," he said.

And college-age students are certainly not excluded. Moseley himself is a recent University graduate: class of 1997. And Michaela Chevalier, the chapter's public relations coordinator and a University student, is a very active member.

"I've always loved ballroom dancing — since I was a little girl," said Chevalier, who is also involved in a ballroom dance team made up of young dancers ranging in age from about 11 to 25.

She said her involvement in ballroom dance has contributed a lot toward her opening up socially.

"You can't help but come out of your shell," she said. "It's just so fun."

Chevalier said about 10 to 20 people at each USABDA dance are in the high school and college age group. She said she's excited that young people are becoming more and more involved in ballroom dancing.

But Chevalier couldn't stress enough that USABDA is not meant for any specific age group or individual.

"There's no specific part you have to fit," she said. "You just have to be looking for something fun to do."

People of all skill levels are welcome, she said, even individuals who have never danced. In fact, before each dance, participants have the opportunity to get a little instruction before they reach the dance floor. This month, instructor Laura Taylor will teach Samba.

Instruction begins at 6 p.m., and the dance itself lasts from 7 to 10 p.m. at Willamalane Adult Activity Center, 215 W. C St., Springfield. The cost is \$3 for USABDA members and \$5 for non-members.

All USABDA dances are smoke-free and alcohol-free.

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15 MINUTES

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FAST FOOD
Gotta have it (81 percent) or gag me with a spoon (19 percent)?
"I like it because it's fast, cheap and good when you're drunk. It's bad for you, but who cares?" — Reid Ichiki

BEST BURGER
Whopper (58 percent) or Big Mac (42 percent)?
"Whopper, 'cause they make it my way! Yeeeah, flame broiled!" — Luke Tison

FAST FOOD CHICKEN SANDWICHES
Scrumptious (35 percent) or science fiction (65 percent)?
"They're really nasty!" — Jeff Spradling

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