

THE EUGENE ZYDECO DANCE COMMUNITY BOOGIES TO THE SOUNDS OF DWIGHT "BLACK CAT" CARRIER & THE ZYDECO RO DOGGS AT NEW DAY BAKERY JUNE 19



# Dance with Me

**EUGENE'S PARTNER DANCE COMMUNITY IS BOOMING** by Bryan Kalbrosky and Alex Notman

Peering through the fence at New Day Bakery in the Whiteaker on any second Wednesday, you may see the twirling of skirts, the shuffling of cowboy boots and dance partners shimmying to the sounds of accordion and washboard. If you squint and listen to the zydeco music, it almost feels like a bustling square in New Orleans.

That was the case on June 19 when the Eugene Zydeco Dance Community (EZDC) brought the Louisiana band Dwight "Black Cat" Carrier & the Zydeco Ro Doggs to the bakery's courtyard. Young and old, beginners and pros, men and women — a motley crew of pairs took to the stone floor as the sun went down. It became clear that night; Eugene has a thriving partner dance scene.

Janice Jensen, a retired local schoolteacher, was one of the organizers of that event. She says the local partner dancing community in Eugene boasts clubs for ballroom, contra, tango, zydeco and West Coast swing. Some clubs have memberships in the hundreds.

Jensen is active in ballroom, swing and zydeco dance

clubs. She recently volunteered to run a newsletter to keep the community informed about dance events in Eugene. "I do it as a service to the dance community to encourage people to go out and dance," she says.

One group featured in the newsletter is the monthly EZDC. Zydeco is a fast-paced, social dance that combines Cajun and Creole music with American blues, jazz and soul. The group meets for zydeco dancing on the second Wednesday evening of every month, with a 30-minute beginner lesson starting at 6:30 pm, at the New Day Bakery (449 Blair Blvd).

Another club Jensen features in the newsletter is the Eugene Swing Dance Club, founded in 1994. The club's Facebook group has nearly 350 members and dances are scheduled every Monday (and the occasional Saturday) at Mac's at The Vet's Club on Willamette. Each week, the club sees between 50 and 80 people. Admission is \$5 for members and students and \$7 for nonmembers, but the price is waived if you are a first-time participant. The first hour offers lessons from instructors for various skill sets, and the

rest of the night is open for social dancing hosted by a DJ.

"Some people come to socialize, but it's a dance," says Catherine Miller, president of the Eugene Swing Dance Club. "I love the dancing, music and laughing with friends."

For many, however, dance can have a more significant meaning than moving and mingling to the music. Three years ago, when she needed to find an exercise that she could do after a surgery, Jensen began taking ballroom lessons from Laura Taylor, an instructor at Dance With Us! studio.

"Dancing is a metaphor for moving forward in your life," Jensen says. "Not only the physical movement of dancing, but also the emotional idea of moving on like you do across the dance floor."

The next time you're walking down Blair or Willamette and you hear that music, grab a partner and dance.

To sign up for Jensen's newsletter, contact [jjcrealestate@gmail.com](mailto:jjcrealestate@gmail.com). For more information about the Eugene Swing Dance Club, visit [68swing.com](http://68swing.com). EZDC's next dance is Wednesday Aug. 13 at New Day Bakery.

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