

Line Dancing Sans the Western Boots

By Coty Dolores Miranda

Ahwatukee resident Carrie McNeish melds her love of line dancing with her vocation as a certified group fitness instructor in her local exercise classes, and for the growing group of class participants, it strikes a perfect chord. Although line dancing has country/western roots – as popularized by the 1980 film *Urban Cowboy* and ubiquitous at wedding receptions after morphing into dances like the 'Electric Slide', McNeish says her Line Dancercise classes employ many music styles including salsa, pop, oldies, hip/hop, funk, swing and rock. Like line dancing, McNeish's classes encourage singles to dance while enjoying calorie-burning, low-impact exercises. She estimates most participants can burn up to 420 calories an hour, depending on how much energy they put into each dance. "And you don't have to be a stellar athlete to do this low-impact exercise," she said. The classes still employ choreography in lines with the look of ensemble dancing, but it's the incorporated exercise that further sets McNeish's original Line Dancercise classes apart. "I teach it for the exercise, we just keep moving. Even when I'm teaching new steps, we're still moving." Like line dancing, her classes are appreciated by women and men. "It's so fun and it's something everyone can do – yes, even real men line dance," said McNeish, chuckling as she pantomimed air quotes on real men. "It does, however, require some coordination, concentration and perseverance, but doesn't everything in the beginning?" Class member and Foothills resident Henry Menendez, 40, says he joined so he could learn the dance steps, but stayed for the exercise. "I wanted to learn to dance because my girlfriend was into it," said Menendez, a manager for Citigroup. "Its very good exercise - you can work up a pretty good sweat. And I'm learning to dance – that's all you need." Currently, McNeish teaches beginner's and intermediate classes at Pecos Community Center and Ahwatukee Swim and Tennis Community Center. Students range in age from 30 to 60 years. Former Jazzercise instructor Lorraine Genthon is an enthusiastic student in McNeish's intermediate class. "Carrie is a fantastic instructor and has I don't know how many hundreds of routines she chooses from, so it's never dull," said Genthon, a 20-year Ahwatukee resident. "Its an actual workout, and I know if anybody tries it they're going to like it." "I recommend new members give themselves four to six classes to get used to the dance terms, combinations, teaching style, and having to think while moving," she said. "A lot of line dancing is about memorization and repetition. In this class you use your body and your brain." McNeish is a mother of two boys, Alex, 12 and Justin 8. Her husband Andy, a Southwest Airlines pilot, claims he's not "much of a dancer". "He's really glad I have an outlet where I can dance without him," laughed McNeish. "Besides being good exercise, Line Dancercise is very social – you meet a lot of great people." McNeish is a mentor trainer for the Exercise Safety Association and will soon begin training other group fitness instructors.



GOTTA DANCE