



Gus Diesslin & Friends include, left to right, Wes Hawkes, John Nelson, Dennis Vlasich, Gus Diesslin, Roy Durnal, Sid Jones, and Bob Rogers.

Music Makers and Memories

At most dinner dances at the Gardens, residents will find Gus Diesslin & Friends performing for the crowd. Formed five years ago, the group has grown from a trio (pianist Gus Diesslin, trumpeter John Nelson and drummer Sid Jones) to a group of seven with the addition of Wes Hawkes, who plays bass instruments, Bob Rogers on vocals, Dennis Vlasich and non-resident bassist Roy Durnal (who is the son-in-law of a Gardens resident).

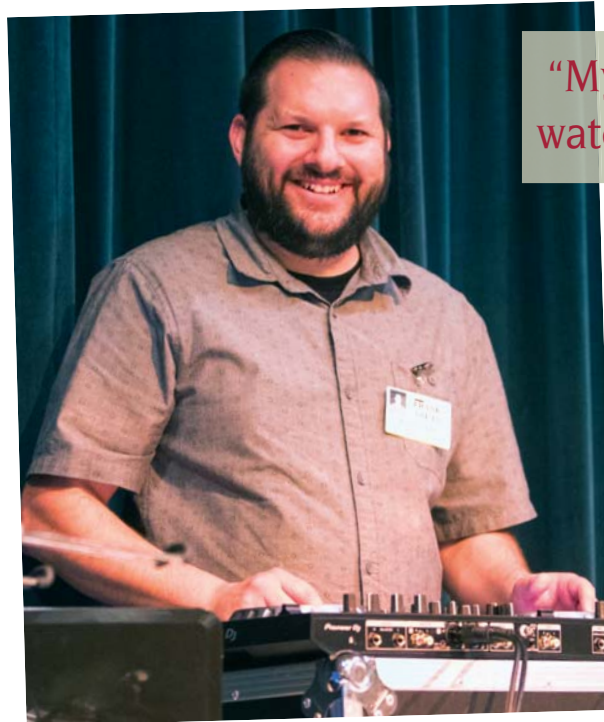
"No matter where you are, it's fun to play music," said Gus. "We play background music for people having a good time. This is what we like to do. We love it."

The band plays from a 700-song music book in which 90 percent of the songs are from many residents' high school days.

"The songs we play bring back a lot of old memories," said John. "We love playing music and seeing the group become so happy when we play a certain song that they cherish."



Gus Diesslin performing with his band at the Gardens Halloween Party.



"My favorite part about being a DJ is watching the residents engage and interact."

DJ Keeping the Beat

Frank Salas, the Gardens' Safety Coordinator, first lent his DJ prowess to the Harvest Dinner Dance in September 2019.

"When the residents learned that I have been a DJ for a long time," said Frank, "they asked if I would be interested in playing music at their dances. I was more than happy to."

His collection, amassed over 15 years, includes a big enough library to play most of the music requested by Gardens residents.

"I love seeing how the different generations' musical tastes differ," said Frank. "Some are into the 30s and 40s, like the Glenn Miller Band, and others like the 50s and 60s rock-n-roll, like Little Richard and Chuck Berry."

"My favorite part about being a DJ is watching the residents engage and interact," said Frank. "You see them light up if they hear a song they love that they haven't heard in a long time. It's fun to see them enjoy themselves and get into the groove of the music."

Frank Salas, Gardens Safety Coordinator and DJ extraordinaire, works his magic at a Gardens dance event.



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Dance Events at Mt. San Antonio Gardens

The Gardens Dance Collective is a group of about 25 residents who are passionate about dance and making dance opportunities available to the community. They coordinate with various Gardens committees on dinner dances and parties, such as the Harvest Dinner Dance, Halloween Party, New Year's Eve Dinner Dance and the Gardens' Bandstand featuring music from the 1960s. They also work with the Gardens Chorale and Theater Company to incorporate dance into concerts and theater productions.

Our most recent active dance organizers have included: Mary Cavena, Debby Griffin, Julie Howard, Lee Jackman, Mary Lindsey, Sharilyn Morell (pictured above) and Lillian Torres.



Line Dancing has become popular at many of the dances.



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Groove is in the Heart



The New Leaf

May 2020



The Harvest Dinner Dance brought the crowds out to enjoy the newly expanded dance floor space in the Gardens Social Center.



We hope this spring edition of *The New Leaf* finds you and your family safe and healthy. Work on this issue began last fall before the world knew there would be a COVID-19 health crisis. We send it to you now in the hope that it will bring a little relief to your day. During this unprecedented and uncertain time, it is critically important that we stay connected as a community. It is our privilege to provide a brief pause to help you focus on what's important: sharing a moment with the ones for whom you care. Thank you for your partnership, patience, and trust as we continue to navigate these uncharted circumstances together.

The New Leaf

Mt. San Antonio Gardens is a nationally accredited Life Care senior community in Claremont and Pomona, California.

The New Leaf is a newsletter for friends and family of residents, board and staff, as well as individuals who have inquired about life at the Gardens.

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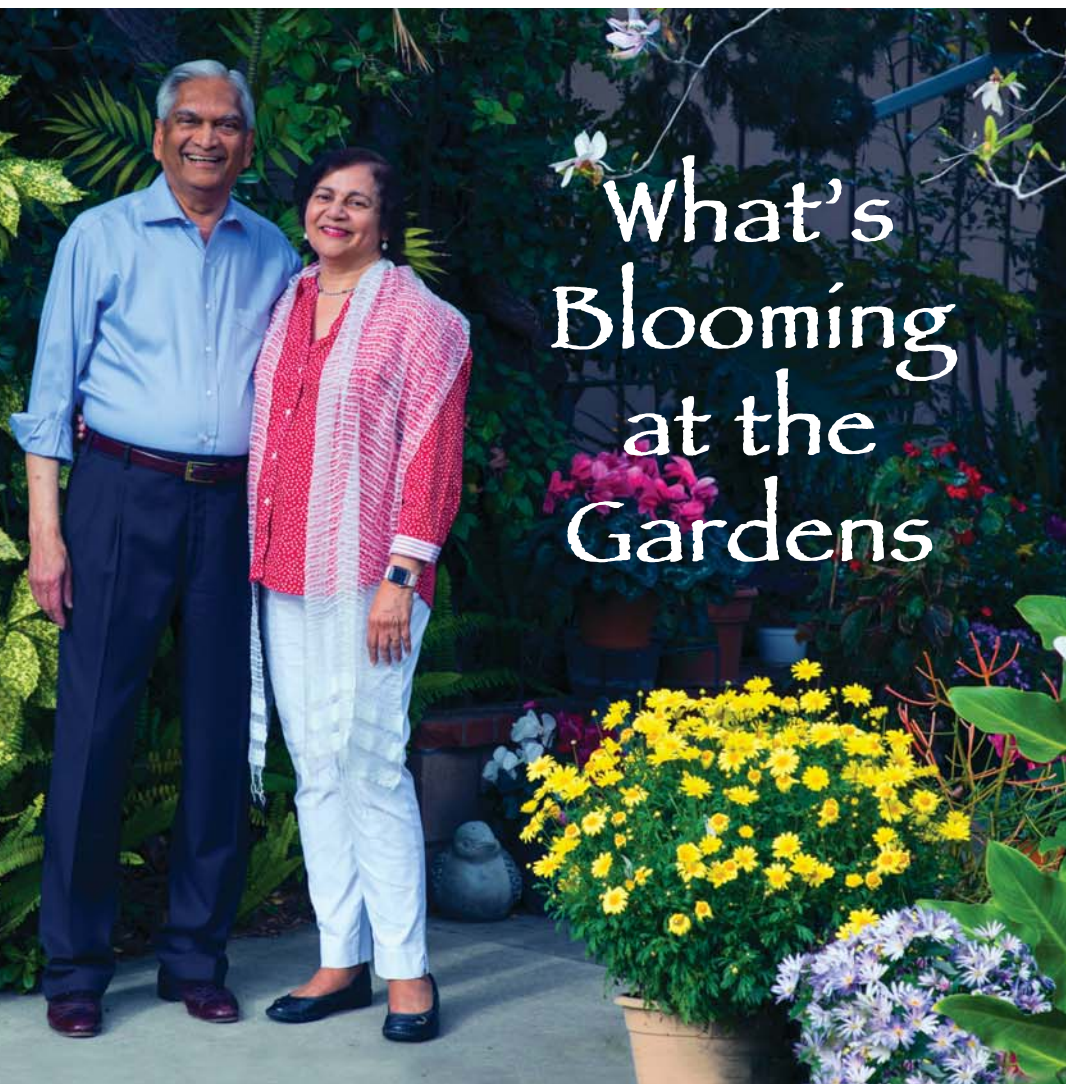


For frequent updates, "Like" Mt. San Antonio Gardens on Facebook

Looking forward...

We are eager for the day when we can invite you to our next event! We will host a lunch and discussion with residents who, like Shanu and Vijay Sathe (pictured here), made the decision to move to the Gardens. Our resident panel will share the many factors that went into their decision-making process.

Look for your invitation in the mail in the coming months.



Groove is in the Heart



At the Gardens, holistic wellness is choreographed to perfection.

A vibrant energy flows through the heart of Mt. San Antonio Gardens, powered by residents who participate, whether competitively or recreationally, in the beautiful, expressive art form known as dance. This ancient activity is cross-cultural, intergenerational and known to strengthen communities through significant cardiovascular and other health benefits. At the Gardens, dance has become a popular activity among residents for social bonding and improving health and wellness. The joy it inspires is evidence that "groove" is truly in the heart.

"Dance is a common research subject among medical doctors and psychologists, and we're always excited to learn about what they find," said Andrea Tyck, Director of the Mt. San Antonio Gardens Wellness Center. "Most research studies show that dance benefits seniors' physical and mental health, and it makes us happy to see our residents regularly enjoying an activity that has been proven to enhance health and wellness."

A 2017 study, *Dancing or Fitness Sport? The Effects of Two Training Programs on Hippocampal Plasticity and Balance Abilities in Healthy Seniors*, published

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Resident and avid ballroom dancer Mary Lindsey with Steppin' Out Ballroom Dance Studio owner, Chris Hughes.



All smiles after performing to "Rock Around the Clock" at the Harvest Dinner Dance are, from left to right, Steppin' Out Ballroom Dance Studio Instructor Joscelyn Graham, with Gardens residents Mary Lindsey, Joan Presecan, Debby Griffin, Sharilyn Morell, Julie Howard, and Frankie Nobert.

"When we dance, we use a lot of muscles that we don't normally use in everyday life; exercising those muscles helps with balance, alignment and posture."

- Instructor, Joscelyn Graham

Groove is in the Heart

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in the peer-reviewed research journal *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience* shows that "older people who routinely partake in physical exercise can reverse the signs of aging in the brain, and dancing has the most profound effect." At the Albert Einstein College of Medicine, researchers are currently studying whether dance may help prevent dementia.

The Gardens encourages dance, which enhances our community's values of companionship and enrichment, and we applaud the residents and staff, highlighted in this issue, who advocate for dance and help incorporate the activity into our residents' lifestyle.

Gardens residents who participate in this art form range from highly experienced competitive dancers to beginners who started dancing much later in life.

"We love seeing the broad spectrum of dancers at the Gardens," said Andrea. "It embodies something that we strongly believe. No matter your age, you can try something new that will improve your health and wellness."

Never Too Late to Start

Resident **Mary Lindsey**, (above, second from left) an avid ballroom dancer specializing in American Tango, Foxtrot, and the Waltz, began dancing only a few years ago when she decided to take lessons in preparation for a family wedding and she has not stopped dancing since.

"Growing up, I loved to watch people dance, but I never tried because I didn't believe I could dance," said Mary. "I started dancing very late in life,

just prior to coming to the Gardens, and I'm so glad that I took the chance. I was intimidated at first, but I've now found an activity that I really love."

Mary is a strong advocate for dance at the Gardens. She considers dance to be one of the best ways for residents to socialize and meet others within the community. Among her many efforts to make more dance opportunities available for residents, Mary helped coordinate the expansion of the dance floor space in the auditorium where dinner dances and parties are held several times a year.

"We have so many residents who enjoy dancing," said Mary. "With the size of the original dance floor, it was hard to allow everyone to dance together at the same time. I saw this as an opportunity to work with staff to figure out a way to install a bigger dance floor and ensure that everyone at the dinner dances and parties has the chance to get on the floor and dance."

Honing Skills for Competition

Resident **Lillian Torres**, whose story is quite opposite of Mary's, does not remember a time when she was not interested in dancing. She recalls being a child, about seven years old, dancing on her front porch, pretending that she was performing classical ballet in a theatre.

"I have loved to dance my entire life," said Lillian. "Dancing to classical ballet and watching others dance classical ballet are two of my favorite memories growing up."

Lillian, now a competitive dancer focusing on ballroom dancing, especially enjoys the International Foxtrot. She continues to hone her craft with lessons



Lynn and Jan Bush at the Gardens Harvest Dance.



Mary Cavena leads a chair tapping performance.

and rehearses at a local dance studio to prepare for competitions such as the California Star Ball and City Lights Ball.

"Dancing keeps me active and engaged. It is overall one of the best things I can do for my health," said Lillian. "I love that it keeps me social and I've made friends through activities like the Gardens' chair tap dancing class."

Creative Movement for All

Over the last 10 years, **Mary Cavena** has taught a weekly chair tap dancing class at the Gardens. In chair tap dancing, dancers stay seated while following regular tap dancing steps.

"I love dance and I love being able to bring it to this community through teaching," said Mary. "At our age, we're not as mobile as we used to be, and a chair tap dancing class helps bridge dancing and safety for older residents."

"The Gardens always accommodates residents who are less mobile," said Andrea. "Mary Cavena's chair tap dancing class is a perfect example of our inclusive community. We are very proud to see that class offered to residents by a fellow resident."

From the time she was very young, Mary was inspired to move anytime she heard music. She took her first lesson, a ballet and tap dancing class, when she was seven and fell in love with the art. She eventually graduated from the Pasadena Playhouse where she studied "a little bit of everything" but with a primary emphasis in musical comedy.

"I'm a strong believer that you don't stop dancing because you grow old. You grow old because you stop dancing," said Mary. "Dance is so good for your health and I'm glad we have the opportunity to do that here at the Gardens."

"The Gardens encourages dance, which enhances our community's values of companionship and enrichment."

- Andrea Tyck, Wellness Center Director

Lillian Torres and Sharilyn Morell



Shared Talents and New Friends

Gardens resident **Lynn Bush** began dancing when he was a toddler. His mother, who quickly noticed Lynn's response to music and his sense of rhythm, enrolled him in a class where he practiced tap dance when he was just two years old.

"I've been dancing ever since I can remember," said Lynn. "It has always been a big part of my life. When my wife and I came to the Gardens, it acted as an introduction to the community."

Lynn and his wife, **Jan**, who both enjoy ballroom dancing, had the opportunity to dance in the Gardens talent show when they first moved into the Gardens. That dance experience was a fun opening to meet other residents and build relationships through a mutual interest in dance.

"Dance is an artistic expression," said Lynn. "It's in your blood to dance. I'm glad to have the opportunity to participate in dance at the Gardens."

Dance Lifts Your Spirits

Gardens resident **Sharilyn Morell** agrees with Lynn. "Dance provides so many opportunities," said Sharilyn. "In its very essence, dance is a way for people to express themselves, have fun and socialize. When you're dancing, you forget that everything else exists. Dance lifts your spirits and makes you more energetic."

Sharilyn has danced for many years and although it has always been "here and there," she has always loved it. She has taken a range of lessons, from Swing and Foxtrot to Waltz and Cha Cha. While working in the travel industry, Sharilyn participated in these dances around the world.

"At the Gardens, we are always encouraged to try new activities," said Sharilyn. "We see residents pick up painting, tai chi and many other interests. Everyone should add dance to their list."

"In the zone...." It's a moment when everything comes together and everything just works. For me it is bliss, and is something that I experience most often with dance."

- Resident, Tish Butler



Music, Movement, Magic

Gardens resident Tish Butler began dancing as a child. She took tap dance and ballet lessons for several years until a back injury caused her to take a small hiatus. As an 11-year-old, she took up ballroom dancing and learned how to Waltz, Foxtrot, Jitterbug and more.

"I've danced all my life. I highly encourage everyone to start dancing," said Tish. "It's fun and, above all, it's good for your health. There are even studies that show it's a great benefit to your brain as it ages."

Tish has now been an Argentine Tango dancer for 20 years. She loves all aspects of dance and is particularly enthralled by its ability to put you "in the zone," a feeling that many runners and other athletes also experience.

"The desire to dance, for me and for many people, starts when you hear music, or even just a rhythm that stirs some emotion in you and makes your body want to respond with movement, says Tish. "When you do respond, it can seem like you are one with the music, and that is a wonderful sensation. Books have been written about this experience of being 'in the zone.' It's a moment when everything comes together and everything just works. For me it is bliss, and is something that I experience most often with dance. It's the most fun I've ever had."

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Resident Tish Butler (left and above) dances the Tango with Jesus Nunez.

"No matter your age, you can try something new that will improve your health and wellness."

- Andrea Tyck, Wellness Center Director



The Gardens Bandstand included a variety of dance styles. Bob and Ethel Rogers and Ken and Marian Brown enjoy a turn on the floor.



An impromptu dance circle at the Bandstand event includes (clockwise, from left) Mary Lindsey, Carol Tanenbaum, Ada Gates, Sharilyn Morell, and Frankie Nobert.



Residents and instructor, Chris Hughes, perform at the fall Gardens Choral Concert.



From the Foxtrot and Waltz to the Twist and Rock and Roll

Residents **Carol** and **Sam Tanenbaum** met as freshmen at Brown University and shared their first dance as sophomores at a family party. They share a love for dance that has remained strong throughout their entire marriage.

"Sam and I met in 1952 during our freshman year at Brown. We knew how to do two dances, the Foxtrot and the Waltz. When we were sophomores, his cousin invited us to a party at her parents' home, and the recorded dance music could be heard throughout the house. Sam and I danced our way into the kitchen as the Jackie Gleason Orchestra played a great instrumental of George Gershwin's "Our Love is Here to Stay". We both knew for sure that the song title was true for us.

Fifteen years later, in 1967, we were living in Puerto Rico with our three young children because Sam was working for Cornell at the Arecibo Observatory. The Observatory crew had a big party and after a few Foxtrots, the band played a lively song I had never heard before called "Love Potion Number 9". We were stymied! It wasn't a Waltz and it wasn't a Foxtrot. As we sat on the sidelines someone encouraged us to dance. I explained that we had no clue how to dance to something where we didn't hold on to each other. "How do you do a dance like that?" I asked. "Well," the questioner replied, "you just get up, stand there and move around to the music." So that's what we've been doing ever since.

Nevertheless, "Our Love is Here to Stay" still remains a favorite dance song for us. We have requested it from the band playing at the Gardens on New Year's Eve several times and they were always willing to do it. In fact, last New Year's Eve they even played it without our having to ask."

