

UNITED ARTS COUNCIL TEAMS UP WITH PARKINSON ASSOCIATION

Naples, Florida (February 9, 2010) - The United Arts Council and the Parkinson Association of Southwest Florida have partnered to offer a program that is unique to the area. The partnership brings the “Dance and Movement” program to Naples for the first time.

“Dance and Movement” was developed by the world-renowned Mark Morris Dance Group in New York City specifically for those who suffer from Parkinson’s. The program is being used at facilities throughout the country, and participants have shown improvement in range of movement and in relaxation abilities. In addition to patient participation, caregivers are also encouraged to participate.

The program is taught by Isabel Castro, who has taught dance classes for the United Arts Council for eight years. Her previous work for the United Arts Council was focused on young people – at-risk elementary and middle school students enrolled in the Council’s after-school arts enrichment programs. Castro has a medical background and studied with the Mark Morris Dance Group, developers of the Parkinson’s program. She is accompanied on the piano by Doug Carman.

Classes were initially offered at the Parkinson Association’s facility in the Hibiscus Center. As demand grew, classes were moved to Fleischman Park. Linda Stewart, executive director of the Parkinson Association, indicates that they have been very pleased by the response. “At first we didn’t know how many people would sign up for the dance classes. As the word has spread, more people are joining in.”

The program appears to be working for at least one participant, Jill Goode. Goode is a seasonal resident who attended a similar Parkinson’s dance class in Chicago. She indicates that she was thrilled to see the classes start in Naples and has already seen results. “I was in the theater and my knee started shaking. I was very restless and didn’t think I could sit in my seat until the end of the play. I started doing a toe-tapping exercise that I learned in the Naples dance class. In a few minutes my symptoms subsided and I was able to enjoy the rest of the play.”

This innovative program brings together two community-based organizations to meet a need in Collier County. It is unique in that it brings together dance arts with health-related services. Funds for the first six months of the program locally were provided by the Martin Foundation.

The Parkinson Association of Southwest Florida’s mission is to promote the quality of life for persons with Parkinson disease and their care partners. For more information about their services and the dance program, call 417-3465.

The United Arts Council is designated by the state of Florida as the official local arts agency for Collier County. Their programs are focused on promoting the arts community and providing arts education and outreach services. Information about the United Arts Council is available online at www.CollierArts.com or by calling 263-8242.

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