

# It's hot! Awareness campaign aimed at preventing heat-related tragedies

Natalie Eckberg  
CORRESPONDENT

With temperatures soaring and remaining in the triple digits, the El Paso Extreme Weather Task Force is soliciting fans as part of its annual "Hot Weather Safety Awareness" cam-

paign.

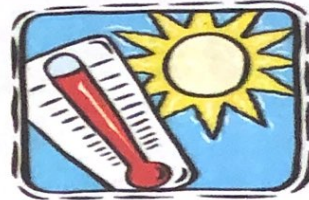
The task force, founded in 2002, is composed of more than 20 agencies that try to prevent weather-related casualties.

Director of the Rio Grande Agency on Aging Yvette Lugo, who serves on the task force, said 322 fans have been distributed as of press

date. Only 30 individual fan donations have been received. As of the press date, the task force was out of fans.

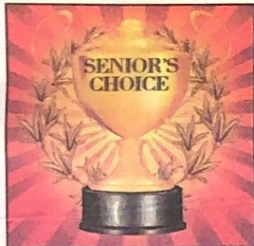
"We are collecting donations for people vulnerable to heat exhaustion - senior citizens, the disabled, those

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4



VALUE PAGE 17

RESTAURANT  
PAGE 21



SENIORS' CHOICE  
2010 VOTING BALLOT  
▶ INSERT



VOLUNTEERS  
SENIORS STAY VERY BUSY  
HELPING WILDLIFE IN  
NEED ▶ 10



JULY 4TH  
CAKE, BEER BATTERS AND  
MARINADES ▶ 22

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## El Paso Southwest Senior

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### 'Staying alive'

Seniors stay healthy, social on the dance floor



Left: Cynthia and Hilario Gamez on the Shundo Dance Studio floor. Cynthia is a tango instructor at Shundo Dance Studio.

Above: Students move gracefully around the floor at a Saturday evening Argentine tango class at Shundo Dance Studio.



Cheri Pearson  
CORRESPONDENT

Eleven years ago, a woman found weeping in her car was given new hope. Dorothy Baker was newly divorced, and although she was parked in front of

a dance hall, she did not have the strength to go inside.

A concerned couple knocked on her window. They told her to wipe her eyes and come inside.

"I went because I had to start living again," Baker says.

That was the beginning of many dance events where Dorothy would don her stockings, sparkling dresses and high-heeled shoes and dance the pain away.

She found her smile again and at one dance, El Pasoan Bill Baker looked over and beheld "a good looking lady with nice legs."

His wife had passed away years ago and he attended the dances to stay connected with friends.

"I walked over, stood next to her,

stretched out my hand, and asked her to dance."

Turned out, the two naturals danced well together.

"By the third dance, I asked her to dinner," he says.

Two years later, in 2001, they married and have been happily dancing since.

#### Good for mind and body

Beyond all the social benefits, local seniors say they benefit mostly from the physical health advantages that dancing offers.

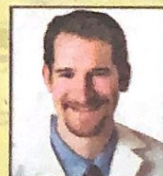
Dancing is a cardiovascular exercise that reduces stress, increases energy, improves strength and increases muscle tone and coordi-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

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# Dance

CONTINUED FROM COVER

nation. The National Heart Lung and Blood Institute states that dancing lowers the risk of coronary heart disease, decreases blood pressure, manages weight and strengthens leg and hip bones.

In 2003, a 21-year study of seniors age 75 and older uncovered groundbreaking results.

The study, led by the Albert Einstein College of Medicine in New York City and funded by the National Institute on Aging looked at the effects of recreational physical and cognitive activities on mental acuity in aging.

Out of the physical activities, they found that dancing frequently (at least several times a week) had the greatest risk reduction for dementia, including Alzheimer's. Frequent social dancing had a whopping 76 percent reduction that even beat out the cognitive activities of active reading, a reduction of 35 percent.

Other habitual cognitive activities like playing board games and musical instruments showed similar results.

"Dancing integrates several brain functions and simultaneously involves kinesthetic, rational, musical and emotional processes," states Richard Powers in a Stanford article on social dance. "The more neural pathways you open up with new challenges like learning a new dance, the better."

The key is frequency, at least three times a week, the studies show.

## Desert Dancers

Louise Rice found a similar salvation in dance.

"I went out dancing because I got a divorce and it saved my life," Rice said. "I met a lot of people. It really was a great thing for me."

Rice became president of the Desert Dancer Chapter of El Paso in 2009, a local chapter of USA Dance, Inc., founded by dancers who met at Shundo Dance Studio in the mid 90's. The club has more than 130 single and married members from El Paso, Las Cruces and Ruidoso. It's a valuable



Jim Wright and Terri Coffman at Shundo Dance Studio's tango class.

Photos by Christian Chapman

source for information on dance parties, studios, classes and events in the region.

"It is a real friendly group," Rice said. "We have a lesson before each dance, so there is always something new to learn."

The chapter extends throughout the region in an effort to include as many people as possible and make dance event comfortable for all.

"Some chapters are into competition. Ours is mostly social and guests are always welcome," says Rice.

Although she would eventually meet her husband at a dance, Rice cautions that dancing is not "a dating service."

"It helps you get out, but you never know," she says.

Desert Dancers members Jim and Joanne Herendeen are used to dancing two - three times a week and Jim is itching to get back on the dance floor after a month-long illness.

"It is good exercise, lots of fun, and gives me something to do," he says.

Joanne thinks there's more to it for her husband.

"He seems to have an inner drive, like breathing, that he has to dance," says Joanne, who had to buy steel arch shoes to keep up

with Jim. The Herendeens met at a dance in Iowa when they were in their 20s and are celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary this year.

Through the years they have done it all - from disco to country line dancing to the challenging ballroom dancing.

They have taken lessons at Shundo Dance Studio, El Paso Ballroom Dance Academy, UTEP's continuing education program, and EPCC's free Senior Adult Program that teaches dance at senior centers around town.

## Two to tango

Mando Rodriguez, owner of Shundo Dance Studio, is well aware of the mental and physical benefits for seniors. His eldest dancer is in her 90s and he has seen an increase in senior enrollment.

"The participation has grown. The only difference is that seniors have always been involved, but with the popularity of 'Dancing With The Stars,' the younger crowd has joined in too," says Rodriguez.

Currently, the most popular class offered at Shundo is the Argentine Tango taught on Saturdays by Larry Williams.

Mundo Rueda, founder and tango instructor of the Argentine Tango Club of El Paso, flies to Argentina every year to refresh his lessons.

"Buenos Aires is the

world capital of tango. At any time of day there are a couple of hundred places you can go dance from noon until 7 a.m.," he says.

Rueda takes his passion seriously and has a collection of more than 10,000 tango songs he uses to teach the way "they dance in the milongas of Buenos Aires" he says.

Rueda, who met his wife at a church Christmas dance, believes that dancing is the most wonderful way to meet people and exercise.

"I like the companionship of it and I love the Argentine Tango because of the passion and intimacy. You can feel the other person's heart beat while you dance cheek to cheek to beautiful, emotional music," he espouses.

There is no membership to his non-profit organization, just a group of like-minded friends who love the authentic art of the classic Argentine Tango and provide free public shows.

To view a calendar of dance classes and events in El Paso, Las Cruces and Ruidoso, visit [www.desert-danceusa.com](http://www.desert-danceusa.com). Those without Internet access may call Louise Rice at 833-8496.

# HEALTH MATTERS

**Q:** HOW DO YOU KNOW WHEN HOSPICE IS APPROPRIATE?

**A:** The patient, family and/or physician can initiate a hospice information/referral call or visit as soon as a terminal disease is diagnosed. When the patient would like to move from a treatment plan focused on curing the disease to a plan focused on providing comfort and relief, they may choose hospice care. At this point, the hospice representative will meet with the patient's personal physician, the patient and the family to discuss available services, expectations and to develop a plan of care designed specifically for the patient and family needs.



Gabriela Hunko, M.D.  
Medical Director, CIMA Hospice

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