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Dancing Your Way to Healthy Aging



Close your eyes. Turn on some music in your head. Now, you hear: “Star through—California Twirl—Roll—Box the Gnat—Pull By.” You’re thinking, “What’s happening here?” And then you hear, “Swing” and “Promenade,” and so you know.... It’s square dancing!

You maybe haven’t thought about square dancing since you were in junior high school, when you were “Doesy Doe’ing” around the gymnasium. You maybe recall the awkwardness of choosing partners and wishing you could fast forward to the end of class when you could go to the math class that you hated.

Your experience may have been something better than described here, but good experience or bad, Steve DuVal, a square dance caller in the Lynchburg, Virginia area, in speaking to the AARP Virginia Lynchburg Dinner Group, gave attendees another chance to try their hand—or feet—at square dancing.

Some time ago, Duval faced a health scare that caused him to reevaluate the circumstances in his life. He began to seek information that he could use to make better decisions in moving forward. He found an intriguing source, *Music on Our Minds: The Rich Potential of Music to Promote Brain Health and Mental Well-Being* (<https://www.aarp.org/health/brain-health/global-council-on-brain-health/music/>) published by the Global Council on Brain Health, a collaborative from AARP.

Through the information he found in that and other sources, DuVal became convinced that social interaction would be a key to healthy aging for him, and so began his journey to become involved with square dancing and eventually to become a caller. He and others in his group that he has labeled *The Bedford Area Community Dance and Social Experiment*, meet every Wednesday evening at 7 p.m. at the Forest Recreation Center, 1088 Rustic Village Road, Forest, Virginia.

His journey has made him passionate about the benefits he has personally reaped, so he has set as a mission to recruit others to join him in his journey toward healthy aging.

To convince the Dinner Group attendees that, “anybody can do it,” Duval and his square dance companions, Doug MacLeod and Carole Collins, invited group participation and became the entertainment of the evening. The Bedford Square Dancers invite anyone who may be interested to come join them. No need to make a reservation. Just show up.

DuVal hit the nail on the head emphasizing the importance of social interaction as well as exercise in healthy aging. Social interaction is the reason the Lynchburg AARP Volunteer Team hosts the Dinner Group at places like Ledo’s Pizza on Old Graves Mill Road in Lynchburg and invites groups like the square dancers, who also have opportunities for people to meet and interact with others.

Social interaction and exercise are two of the Six Pillars of Brain Health (<https://states.aarp.org/virginia/the-six-pillars-of-brain-health>), a program that AARP volunteers who are part of the speakers bureau, present to groups interested in healthy aging. If you or groups of which you are a part are interested in learning more about brain health or other topics, you can request a speaker (<https://states.aarp.org/virginia/speakerrequest>) online.

AARP Virginia offers event opportunities both in person and virtually in Lynchburg and throughout Virginia all year long. You can find a full list on the Upcoming Events page (<https://states.aarp.org/virginia/upcoming-events>).

One of the great ways to have social interaction opportunities is to become a volunteer with AARP Virginia. You can find out more information about volunteering at [AARP.org/Volunteer](https://www.aarp.org/volunteer) (<https://www.aarp.org/volunteer>).

This story is provided by AARP Virginia. Visit the AARP Virginia (<https://states.aarp.org/region/virginia/>) page for more news, events, and programs affecting retirement, health care, and more.

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