

National Dance Day aims to get Visalia people moving

BY HILLARY S. MEEKS • hmeeks@visalia.gannett.com • July 26, 2010

Many Visalia residents were glued to the television when hometown competitor Ashley Galvan was dancing for the title of "America's Best Dancer" on Fox's "So You Think You Can Dance."

While the 20-year-old had to bow out of the competition due to a rib injury, some Visalia viewers took note of the National Dance Day on July 31 that had been promoted on the dance show. This grassroots movement's purpose: to get people healthy and moving through dance.

"[Dance] is the only exercise I've been doing for 17 years now," Galvan said. "I prefer going to the studio or just dancing around the house whenever I can."

Even though she's resting so she can heal, that hasn't stopped one of the Galvan family's friends from planning a National Dance Day event that would celebrate movement and the young dancer.

"I've known Ashley since she was a

baby, and I just decided today that we should do something," said Judy Havens last week. "I had thought, 'This is crazy, no one's doing anything [for National Dance Day] after she's been through all this drama?'"

National Dance Day events are scheduled all over the nation, and in all the major cities, said "So You Think You Can Dance" judge Nigel Lythgoe on the Thursday evening show. U.S. Rep. Eleanor Holmes Norton, D-Washington D.C., will introduce a resolution July 31 to have Congress officially recognize National Dance Day, stated a news release from the congresswoman.

Visalia doesn't have any official events scheduled, but Havens and her friend Kathy George realized that wouldn't do. After deciding to organize an event, they contacted local A&W Restaurant owner Craig Van Horn and he offered the parking lot next to his Mooney Boulevard restaurant for the free event.

"Ashley is going to be there and I'm going to get her to talk on the mike and [possibly] sign autographs," Havens said. "We'll do the electric slide or something so everybody can get out and dance."

More details are being fleshed out, such as getting a live band to play and having radio station KJUG on hand to participate, she said.

Havens is not the only one who wants Visalia residents to get moving. Betsy Sorensen, owner of Toddle Fitness in Visalia, was also inspired by "So You Think You Can Dance" to have an event on Saturday. Her business is all about dance for fun and for exercise.

"We dance for fun, we don't compete," she said.

Sorensen and all her instructors learned the hip-hop dance that "So You Think You Can Dance" choreographers Tabitha and Napoleon D'umo made just for National Dance Day. The duo said on their instructional online video for the routine that it's, "Designed to be easy enough for anyone to get up off the couch, join in and learn it."

In turn, the Toddle Fitness instructors will teach the routine children at the Boys & Girls Club, as well as host open houses at Toddle Fitness to teach anyone how to do the dance. Sorensen plans to have everyone do the dance at 1 p.m. at Toddle Fitness - for possibly at a larger venue if a lot of people show interest. She also said they may participate in

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Haven's event as well as have the earlier event.



Pebbles Ryland, left, Rebecca Coffey and Gabrielle Johnson practice a dance routine for National Dance Day at Toddle Fitness in Visalia. Anyone wishing to learn the routine may join them 5:30 p.m on Monday, 6:30 p.m. on Tuesday or 5:30 p.m on Thursday. The performance is 1 p.m. Saturday. For more information: 622-9095 or www.toddlefitness.com. (Ron Holman)



Taylor Kelley, 3, left, and Taylor McElree, 4, practice their fifth position during the "I Wanna Dance" class at Toddle Fitness in Visalia. (Hillary S. Meeks)



From left: Jenni Gagnon, 3, Taylor Kelley, 3 and Taylor McElree, 4, follow assistant dance teacher Gabrielle Johnson during the "I Wanna Dance" class at Toddle Fitness in Visalia. (Hillary S. Meeks)

Want to learn the dance?

Learn the Tabitha and Napoleon D'umo hip-hop routine for National Dance Day either by going to www.dizzyfeetfoundation.org, or by attending free classes at Toddle Fitness at the following times:

- 5:30 p.m. Monday
- 6:30 p.m. Tuesday
- 5:30 p.m. Tuesday

Join in the fun

National Dance Day will be celebrated starting 7 p.m. Saturday at the A&W Restaurant parking lot at 2611 S. Mooney Blvd. Former "So You Think You Can Dance"

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