

Award-winning volunteer is light on her feet

WHERE JENNIFER GORMAN of Blackhawk goes, others follow.

It comes as no surprise that she is a recipient of one of the Mary Shockley Memorial Awards for Outstanding Service, given each year by the Central Contra Costa County Senior Coalition. Nominations for the awards come from senior centers and agencies in central Contra Costa.

The Chinese American Senior Center, where Gorman has volunteered for the past three years, is a program of the Culture to Culture Foundation. Chia-Chia Chien, founder and CEO of the foundation, nominated her. Gorman's volunteer work includes acting as treasurer of the center; being in charge of membership, the database and all contact information; coordinating events and trip planning; teaching conversational Chinese as well as Chinese exercise classes, Dancercise and Social Dance at several senior centers — either for free or for \$1.50 per class.



GEORGIA LAMBERT
Around Blackhawk

She said teaching conversational Chinese is the most challenging class for her.

"It takes years to learn. My students are mainly American-born Chinese. At this level, I can handle it. I watched a lot of Chinese programs to help prepare and I spent many weekend hours preparing my lesson plans. Right now we're taking a break, but we'll probably start another session in the fall," she said.

The exercise and social dance classes are offered in four different locations on four different days: Mondays through June 30 at Hap Magee Park Ranch in Alamo, where Luk Tung Kuen begins

at 10 a.m., Dancercise at 11 a.m. and Social Dance at 2 p.m. Tuesdays, on an ongoing basis at the Pleasant Hill Senior Center, Dancercise is offered at 1 p.m. and Luk Tung Kuen at 2 p.m.

The Danville Senior Center has four ongoing classes on Wednesdays, except the first Wednesday of the month: Yuan Ji Wu at 9:30 a.m., Luk Tung Kuen at 10:30 a.m.; Dancercise at 11:30 a.m. and Social Dance at 12:30 p.m. On alternating Fridays from 1 to 2 p.m. during the summer session from June 27 to Sept. 5, Luk Tung Kuen will be offered at Lafayette Senior Services.

Yuan Ji is popular in Taiwan, Gorman said, and Luk Tung Kuen, which features 36 movements of Chinese exercise done in sets of 10, is popular in Hong Kong. Dancercise is what Gorman calls line dancing and social dancing is traditional ballroom style.

"Teaching social dancing in the afternoon at senior centers poses a great challenge," Gorman said.

"Social dancing is a partner dance, and very often there are more women interested in social dancing than men.

"This is true of many of the senior centers' afternoon dances in the Bay Area which I have visited. Most women who attend the class would prefer to do the ladies' part. As a result, it challenges me to teach them the steps without the men. We still can dance without the guys — I take the lead."

The Chinese American Senior Center is the first of its kind to operate in Contra Costa County, Gorman said. For the first few years, activities were offered only to Chinese Americans.

"Last year, we felt it was time for us to go mainstream. We are like goodwill ambassadors offering our services for free to the senior centers, introducing Chinese exercises," she said.

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