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For the Love of Dance, and More

By Lou Fancher



Susan Edgren Williams Photo provided

Susan Edgren Williams has fallen in love-twice. First with dance, and second, with children. Which is why she is the perfect candidate for starting and expanding a new ballet program at Moraga's

Hacienda de las Flores. Williams is bringing her expertise to dance classes for young children through adults.

Armed with an extensive ~~room~~ and experience producing community dance events, Williams' greatest asset was acquired before the age of five. "My mom took me to the Ballet Russe, and that did it," she says. "I wanted to be a ballet dancer for the rest of my life."

Moving from Nebraska to Lafayette at the age of 11 did not reduce her ambitions. She danced with the Oakland Ballet in its early days, describing the company as "a little family who all loved to dance." While attending college, she performed and taught steadily, interrupting her dance career only once, to pour her considerable energy into creating and nurturing a family. While her three children may have pulled her from the stage, she continued to instruct, passing to them her appreciation for artistic endeavors. Now grown, her children have chosen work and hobbies in the physical or visual arts.

Williams, her nest recently empty, is turning her attention to the community. Interested in making a contribution to the thriving Lamorinda dance scene, she is developing the new program based on an academy she founded more than ten years ago in Orinda, of which she shares both fond, poetic memories-"I rented a fairy tale studio, with an antler chandelier and wisteria growing over an arched doorway," and practical ones-"I had great students there." She's part magician and part work-horse; two qualities often found in seasoned dance professionals.

Experienced with both young dancers and young-at-heart adult students, Williams is more than just a teacher. She's an educator, providing historical context, musical background and even archival videos of the great ballets for her students. She knows what's important ("You've got to keep those little ones moving!") but also emphasizes correct training, performance opportunities and a positive environment. "They need to work hard, get the right messages, and enjoy it," she says.

Williams expects the community to learn along with the students. Ballet, where arms arc like rainbows and leaps land like melting butter, is deceptive. One class will rapidly teach that buried in all the grace and ease, dance is a demanding athletic discipline. Williams, with her wise eye and gentle touch, will teach bodies young and old to stretch, sweat, and fall in love with this timeless art form.

For more information about the program, contact Susan Edgren Williams at 925-255-8391, or the Moraga Parks and Recreation Department at 925-888-7045.



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