

## Giving Back



### Heartland's members provide free entertainment to local organizations

The Heartland Chapter is proud to have a large, talented and very active performing group of dancers who are eager to share their passion for dance with others in the community.

It is no secret that dancers love performing. At Heartland, we do so with passion knowing that our enthusiasm will make for sometimes less than perfect moves.

What started as a small group of dancers with occasional public performances has grown into a large and ever evolving dancing community.

Besides performing several times a year at the Arts Garden of the Indianapolis Circle City Mall, the Heartland members routinely perform at numerous nursing homes, rehabilitation centers, retirement communities and United Way campaigns. Some of these organizations get approached by Heartland's Special Events Coordinator, others contact us via website or through the word of mouth.

Our performers are a very diverse group, ranging from university students to doctors and engineers to retirees. The oldest member of our performing group is 86 years old, and she does not miss a single opportunity to showcase her dance skills.

The performers represent different dancing skill level as well, ranging from beginners to seasoned social dancers to competitors and National Amateur Champions.

To increase participation in the program, we made it very simple: all skill levels are welcome; and no partner is necessary. If you'd like to dance, we will pair you up with another dancer. At the beginning this meant that some of our male dancers needed to perform with 2 or 3 different female dancers per event; but as the group expanded the number of male and female performers has evened out. The participants are given a choice of dancing a routine as an individual couple on in a group setting. Paired up couples then meet on their own to practice. Less experienced dancers often opt for "group-only" participation. The group dances require no rehearsals and tend to remove the "anxiety factor" from the performance. We typically choose energetic dances such as Cha-Cha or Swing for group dances to fit as many couples as possible on the dance floor.

Our programs range in length anywhere from 15min to over an hour.

For a 1 hour program, we generally have up to 10 individual routines and 2 to 4 group dances. During the group part of the event, we encourage the audience participation as well.

The settings in which we perform vary from one place to another: some organizations boast real stages, others reserve small section of their cafeteria for dance performances. Although having a wooden floor is a preferred option for any serious dancer, some facilities we perform at simply do not have them. This is especially true for rehabilitation and nursing homes where the floors' main requirement is to provide an anti-slippery surface for their residents. As a result, our dancing experience to date ranges from marble and concrete floors to carpet and linoleum. Some of these surfaces are so "spin-resistant" that our dancers have to be creating when executing spins and turns. Sometimes, this means abandoning a proper footwork technique; but we do so knowing that we have forgiving audience that judges us primarily by our energy and our smiles.

Some programs that Heartland puts together are theme-specific (Valentine's Day, Thanksgiving), but majority fall into the "just because" category.

The Heartland took the program to the next level when we decided to no longer restrict participation to Chapter members and invited other dance groups to perform at these events. To date, we've collaborated with several other ballroom dance clubs, as well as with Salsa, Cabaret and modern dancers. We also expanded our pool of performers by inviting singers, many of whom do both singing and dancing! We even have our own videographer! We are hoping that in the future we can also attract musicians who can provide live accompaniment to our performers. What is next, you might ask? Ballet dancers? Quite possible.

You can view more pictures of our performances at Heartland's website:  
<http://www.indyusadance.org/photos/>