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# Music & movement for better health

by Jim Morrow

"I am a strong believer in the adage 'If you don't use it you will lose it,'" says Nia instructor Carol Kennedy.

"Nia," Carol explains "is a fun and creative way to keep the body and the mind healthy."

Nia is a one hour workout that draws from modern dance the martial arts and the healing arts such as yoga.

It is done to music and is designed to waken the senses; to stimulate creativity and to be just plain fun. Nia espouses the pleasure principal: do it if it feels good; stop if it doesn't.

Each participant moves in their own way at their own level as they follow the instructor who is leading them through choreographed moves to the music while giving verbal instruction.



Carol Kennedy (front) leads a Nia class at the Indian Brook Fire Hall.

It begins with a warm-up, soft breathing and easy steps then builds to more dynamic and energetic martial arts moves and finishes with stretches and deep breathing

Carol says "Nia is like a movement meditation that leaves one both calm and energized. One of the philosophies is to encourage people to become engaged with their own bodies. Through movement we find health."

A study has shown that professional dancers do not suffer from alzheimer's disease. Carol feels that the act of translating music into movement is an exercise for the brain so Nia was a perfect fit.

"Nia re-awakened my love of dance says Carol. I feel energized and mentally refreshed after a session.

Three years ago Carol attended a Nia class in Toronto. The instructor approached her after the class and said, "You are a dancer. You should consider teaching Nia."

Carol then spent two weeks attend-

ing classes and returned to St. Ann's and started "Healthy Moves".

Encouraged by supporters Carol completed the white belt certification in the summer of 2010 and is now qualified to be a Nia instructor.

Some comments on the Nia program include: "I smiled for an entire hour." "I am always overwhelmed on the benefits of moving with others." "Wonderful spending a few hours a week with structured movement to music." "Inspirational to be with a senior instructor who is in good shape."

Presently Carol is working on a New Horizons grant leading participants at the North River Hall and the Gaelic College.

Carol is starting a new session at Cabot Shore Resorts on Tuesdays at 9 am and 5 pm starting May 10; the Gaelic College at 6 pm starting May 4th, and North River Hall at 9 am starting May 6.

Carol wants to add that no experience is necessary. "Come as you are. No special clothes are required just come as you are and enjoy yourself," she says.

If interested call 929 2318 or email carolk@ns.sympatico.ca.

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