

The high school dance club met on regular after-school days and the students, most of whom didn't drive, were able to take advantage of the courtesy bus rides home.



## Houston (TX) Chapter 5003 'I Hope You'll Dance' Launches New Journey Within High Schools

Resource: Dr. Linda Runyon

The Houston Chapter's 2014-15 theme "I hope you'll dance" was an effort to encourage dance initiatives made possible through grants and hands-on member support. It also started one new ambassador journey in community outreach.

As Dr. Linda Runyon explained, their new program "all began with a hope and a dream" -- the Chapter hoped that schools would be receptive to student dance groups and dreamed that the idea would spread to other Houston area schools.

But as Linda explained, there was a reality check: "Introducing ballroom dance to high school students required more than the hope that school officials, who have countless demands on their time, would gracefully waltz into the chapter's waiting arms and twinkle with delight. It was quickly understood, however, that to be successful, this was a job for an insider. So, the board looked within the membership for those who were not only teachers in the local high schools, but who also could jump and jive through the various requirements



Charles Runyon

necessary to begin a ballroom dance club."

After finding two USA Dance members, also teachers, willing to organize the program, the Chapter contacted USA Dance National for supporting documents for the school district proposal. The final presentation also included a list of interested students.

The Chapter admitted that deciding on fun t-shirts for the club proved easier than deciding which dances, steps and music to focus on. So the Chapter decided to listen to what the students liked and decided to start out with single-time swing.

"With the promise of after-school cookies and plenty of music, students hurried to the meeting room after school, dropping backpacks, grabbing a treat, and heading for the dance floor," Linda said. First ses-

sion was in the school hallway which ended up attracting other students' interest and even applause from the janitorial staff.

Typically 12 to 16 students, equal numbers of boys and girls, came to each lesson. Swing led to salsa to fox trot, and to demonstrations of rumba and cha-cha. And, being in the heart of Texas, "a little two-step and a boot-scooting line dance were important in the dance repertoire" Linda admitted.

To end the semester on a positive note, the Chapter contacted José Melendez, owner of Planet Ballroom, who volunteered to sponsor a class dance party. Even though that day brought torrential rains, it didn't dampen the spirits of students who wanted to dance. (There were also free pizza and soft drinks!)