

Sucheta Thekkedam, 22 with Dances of India performs during "The Wizard of Oz" at the DeSmet High School Auditorium. Thekkedam, whose mother is American and father is Indian, is a recent graduate of the School of Dance of India. Katherine Bish

Movements with meaning

Ethnic dance is part workout, part celebration of the past.

Where you can learn to dance

Here's just a sampling — and definitely not a complete listing — of local groups, classes and schools that offer instruction in international dance:

DANCES OF THE WORLD

International Folk Dance Association of University City
Dances from the Balkans, South Africa, Israel, Greece and more are among the hundreds of line, circle and couples dances in the group's repertoire.

7:30 to 10:45 p.m. Saturdays, University United Methodist Church, 6901 Washington Avenue, University City.

Contact: www.stlouisfolkdance.org; Ellen Dorfman, 314-832-2339

EUROPEAN AND MIDDLE EASTERN ETHNIC DANCE

St. Louis Community College adult education course taught by Denis Murphy

Contact: www.stlcc.edu

INTERNATIONAL COUPLES DANCING

Dances from around the world, but with the focus on those for twosomes.

Meets some Sunday evenings.

Contact: www.stlouisfolkdance.org; Rex or Nancy Couture, 314-275-8228

DANCES OF UNIVERSAL PEACE

Group gathering that focuses on sacred songs and movements from many spiritual traditions, including Sufi, Christian, Jewish, Islamic, Pagan, Zoroastrian, Buddhist, Hindu, American Indian and African.

7:30 to 9:30 p.m. on the third Friday of the month in the basement of Unity Christ Church, 33 North Skinker Boulevard.

Contact: Sandra Griffin at suregriffin@hotmail.com.

CENTER OF CREATIVE ARTS

Offers a variety of ethnic and international dance courses for all ages.

Contact: www.cocastl.org, 314-725-6555

AFRICAN

Lessons in traditional West African dances of Mali for anyone 5 and up.

5:30 to 7 p.m. Tuesdays, West End Community Center, 724 North Union Boulevard.

Contact: DeBorah Ahmed, 314-367-3440

Lessons on a mix of dances from Ivory Coast, Guinea and Mali for all ages, taught by instructor Diadie Bathily.

Contact: dbathily@yahoo.com or 314-522-6308

ENGLISH

St. Louis English Country Dancers offers lessons and gatherings that focus on traditional line dances and some couples dances.

7 to 9:30 p.m. Monday, once a month, Focal Point Arts Center, 2720 Sutton Boulevard, Maplewood; 7 to 9:30 p.m. Friday, once a month, Congregational United Church of Christ, 2400 South Brentwood Boulevard, Brentwood.

Contact: members.aol.com/paradisemo/english.html; Paul Stamler, 314-664-9207

MORE LESSONS, HF6

By Lisa Eisenhauer
ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

On Tuesdays, dancers at the West End Community Center in St. Louis get a workout thanks to the rhythmic moves and music of Mali.

On Thursdays, a small but diverse crowd joins hands in Creve Coeur for two hours of ancient and modern Israeli folk dances.

Every other Saturday, Scottish country dancers gather in St. Peters for some stately and some high-energy footwork. On any given day or evening

somewhere in the region, dancers twirl, skip and leap into other-worldly experiences. They gather at schools, churches and clubs to form into lines, circles and couples. In their separate clusters, they retrace footprints that originated in other parts of the globe, often long, long ago.

At the Center of Creative Arts in University City, instructor Diadie Bathily says some of the West African dances he teaches are actually links to traditional celebrations that go back centuries. But even in these modern times, he says, moves originally meant to herald the harvest in Guinea or praise a full moon in

Ivory Coast can have the same relaxing, rejuvenating and liberating effect on a dancer on the other side of the globe.

"It's never, never boring," Bathily says. "I don't know how to explain it."

The Israeli folk dancers who gather each week only skim the surface of a catalog of thousands of dances, each with their own corresponding song, says Gloria Bilchik. "There are some that are historic, but there are also some that are contemporary," she says.

And like those dances, the regulars at the gatherings are quite a mix. Jewish

PLEASE SEE **DANCE** | HF6

What to wear or bring

Clothing: Casual wear for social gatherings and workout wear for lessons.

Shoes: Generally, slick-soled shoes that will allow easy movement but aren't slippery (those with leather heels are often recommended).

Partner: No, say most of the groups; if one is needed, they'll pair you up.

Best dance for ... All year we profiled different types of dance. Here are our picks for the best of the best:

Toughest workout: Hip-hop

Best for flexibility: Ballet

Best for mental acuity: Tap dancing

Most social: Square dancing

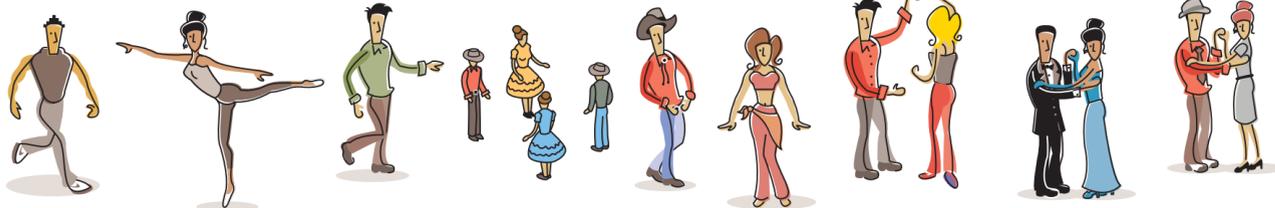
Easiest to learn: Country line dancing

Sexiest: Hula and belly dance

Best for dates: Salsa dancing

Best for coordination: Ballroom dancing

Most fun: Swing dancing



➔ To see our entire dance series, please go to www.stltoday.com/healthfitness.

Young people can suffer from depression, too

But the illness can be hard to detect, because their symptoms don't always mimic those of adults.

➔ **Editor's note:** This is the last in a four-part series we are publishing on teen health. To see the other stories, go to www.stltoday.com/healthfitness.

By Linda H. Lamb
KNIGHT RIDDER NEWSPAPERS

COLUMBIA, S.C. • Looking back now, she realizes that being in a ticky-tacky Tennessee vacation spot probably had nothing to do with her urge to self-destruct.

Yet for Ansley Gasque-Carter, memories of Hollywood will always remind her of that day during a family outing when she turned to her mother and said, "I want to kill myself."

She was 9, and starting a journey no parent would ever wish for their child: to the dark realm of depression and back.

The "and back" part is important. Ansley, now a self-possessed 16-year-old junior at a South Carolina high school, found help through medication

and counseling.

But depression among children and teenagers can be depressingly hard to detect, confirm, understand, relate to and cure.

In the past year, treating depressed kids got even trickier with a federal warning that antidepressants may have effects opposite from those desired — might make some children feel more suicidal, not less.

Thus Ouidette Gasque-Carter, Ansley's mom, seems to be talking about herself as well as her daughter when she describes depression's scars.

"There is a pain associated with depression that other people don't know about," she said.

Even a discussion of depression has its bright side, however. Certain techniques can help you "depression-proof" your children to some extent. And depressed children and teens have a much better chance of recovery if their illness is detected and dealt with at an early stage, said David Almeida, executive director of the National Al-

liance for the Mentally Ill of South Carolina.

"When it comes to childhood depression, the greatest danger may be to do nothing at all," he said.

Teen suicide

About 20 percent of young people will have one or more episodes of major depression by the time they become adults, according to Almeida's group.

The suicide rate among teenagers is about 10 per 100,000, said Dr. Richard Harding, a child and adolescent psychiatrist who is medical director of psychiatry for Palmetto Health and chairman for neuropsychiatry at the University of South Carolina medical school.

Suicides in children younger than 12 are rare, he said. Suicide among teens has declined in recent years — often attributed to the use of antidepressant medications — but it is the third leading

PLEASE SEE **TEENS** | HF6

Warning signs:

Mental health experts caution that signs of depression may be different in children — for example, they may seem irritated rather than sad. With that in mind, however, here are some possible signs of depression in children and teens:

- Frequent sadness and crying.
- Hopelessness.
- Declining interest in activities; inability to enjoy activities they used to enjoy.
- Persistent boredom; lack of energy.
- Social isolation; poor communication.
- Low self-esteem; feelings of guilt.
- Extreme sensitivity to rejection or failure.
- Increased irritability, anger or hostility.
- Difficulty in relationships.
- Frequent physical complaints, such as of headaches and stomachaches.
- Absence from school or poor performance.
- Inability to concentrate.
- Significant changes in eating or sleeping patterns.
- Talk of or efforts at running away from home.
- Expressions of suicide or self-destructive behavior.

Source: American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry
Suicide prevention hot line Toll-free line with trained counselors: 1-800-273-8255

Headline: Movements with meaning: Ethnic dance is part workout, part celebration of the past.

Byline/Title: By Lisa Eisenhauer
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Body Text: On Tuesdays, dancers at the West End Community Center in St. Louis get a workout thanks to the rhythmic moves and music of Mali.

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And like those dances, the regulars at the gatherings are quite a mix. Jewish hoofers join hands with Catholics and Unitarians for dances with Russian, Turkish, Moroccan and American influences. "It really reflects the potpourri of Israeli culture," Bilchik says.

Another potpourri, a local one, is drawn to the St. Louis Irish Arts school. There, students from Africa, Bosnia and India join the Midwesterners who come for lessons on the music, songs and dances of Ireland.

Instructor Helen Gannon doesn't find the ethnic mix her school attracts unusual. "You don't have to be Irish to enjoy Irish dancing," she says.

While each gathering and each crowd is unique, the dancers share the desire to get on their feet, to socialize and to savor their own personal favorites from the distinct styles of expressive movement that bring people all over the world to their feet.

It's that world of diversity itself that some of the dancers find irresistible. Take Ellen Dorfman, who joined the International Folk Dance Association of University City six years and 50 pounds ago.

She loves that the group has a repertoire of hundreds of dances and that the mix varies each time the dancers gather. They start out with simpler ones and move on to the complicated.

But each week's mix proves to be quite a workout -- hence her weight loss. "It's very aerobic, very good for coordination," Dorfman says.

Nancy Couture, who shares a passion for Scandinavian dancing with her husband, Rex, points to another benefit from her dance style of choice. Couture says the spirited dances, most of them for couples, require concentration and are as much a mental as physical workout.

Nevertheless, she says, over the decades that she has danced she has found that amid the footwork and teamwork her payoff for keeping in step with dances that go back centuries is "total relaxation."

What to wear or bring

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Shoes: Generally, slick-soled shoes that will allow easy movement but aren't slippery (those with leather heels are often recommended).

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