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Tuesday, December 16, 2014



# Swinging into the holidays at BlackRock

*Class, dance party offered on Thursday*

By Samantha Schmieder Staff Writer

BlackRock Center for the Arts is giving aspiring dancers the chance to two-step their way into the season with a Holiday Swing Party on Thursday.

Those looking for a night filled with music and fun can come out at 7:30 p.m. alone, with a partner or with a whole crew. Everyone will receive a swing lesson from Gottaswing and then put their moves to the test when Daryl Davis, a legendary area boogie-woogie performer, takes the stage for the rest of the evening.

Gottaswing is a D.C.-area dance instruction and event promotion company that travels to different venues for classes and special occasions. Debra Sternberg of Gottaswing will start out the night with a quick lesson to get everyone acquainted with the dance.

"We do what we jokingly refer to as 'survival skills,' or enough basic skills to make it on the dance floor — footwork patterns, turns and spins," Sternberg said.

Once the lesson is complete, students are free to dance on their own, but Sternberg said she and her partner will be around the rest of the night in case anyone needs additional pointers. Attendees can dance the whole night or take the time to socialize or grab a drink at BlackRock's concessions.

Sternberg said that having this event at BlackRock is great because the arts center offers so much more than just room to dance. She has noticed that many people come back for more each time they host a swing night at BlackRock, and there's no specific age group, everyone is welcome and everyone comes out.

"It's not like you have to have a partner; everybody dances with everyone else. It gives you the chance to dance with all the other people during the lesson until you feel comfortable," Sternberg said.

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after. It's a great way to meet people; you don't have to come as a partner, you can meet people there," Kingsley said.

Though Sternberg may be a bit biased, she said the dance parties are a "really nice thing for people."

Lynne Kingsley, director of marketing and communications at BlackRock, said the center hosted a holiday swing night last year with Davis and Gottaswing and it was a huge hit.

"It was sold out, it was packed," Kingsley said.

After the success of that event, BlackRock began offering monthly classes and dance parties that Kingsley said "people love." In addition to the swing nights, they also host a salsa and bachata dance party. However, Thursday's event is different than the monthly dances because Davis will be there performing live rather than people just dancing to a DJ.

"The Gottaswing partnership inspired the party aspect of it.

It's a great model for the lesson first and then the party

after. It's a great way to meet people; you don't have to come as a partner, you can meet people there," Kingsley said.

"I think it's the best thing in the entire universe and everybody should come out and go dancing," Sternberg said.

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