

SPORTS

SOCIAL SCENE

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NEWS

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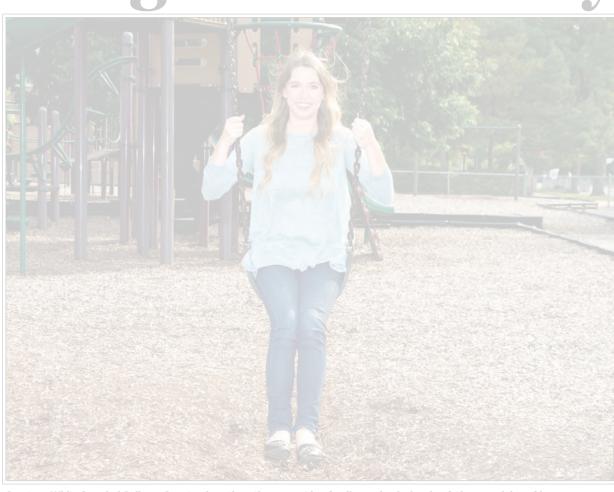
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BREAKFAST

Cutting a rug with community leader Wendy Horwitch. P30



Courtney White founded Culinary Care to give others the support her family received when her father was dying of lung cancer.

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SUNDAY BREAKFAST

Dance-loving Horwitch keeps in step with her community

BY BILL MCLEAN ILLUSTRATION BY BARRY BLITT

he danced as a child, as a teen, as a college student. Those figure skates, the ones she wore before modern dance beckoned, rested somewhere in a closet, maybe in a garage, and never moved again.

Frozen forever ... in room tem-

The dancer, 39-year-old Wendy Horwitch, still loves to dance, still loves to talk about dance. The Highland Park High School graduate, the Highland Park resident and the Highland Park Community House (HPCH) Executive Director sits across from me at Walker Bros. Original Pancake House in — where else? - Highland Park and interrupts herself while praising one of her mentors, former HPHS Dance Director Ginny Siano.

"Am I talking too much?" Horwitch, in her ninth year as the face of HPCH, asks as she awaits her order of scrambled eggs and a bialy. "I hope not. I am so used to asking the questions, most of the questions, where I work. People come to me, wanting to hold a special event in their lives at Community House, a unique place. I want to know all about the family, so I ask away. I'm

curious about people. I like to listen. I then like to tell them, 'This is your home. Dress it up any way you like. It's your home for the event, your space, your canvas."

The Highland Park Woman's Club, founded in 1899, started using the Highland Park Community House for its meetings and programs in 1924, a roaring year. The Woman's Club oversaw the establishment of the city's first public library. It conducted blood drives during World War II. It became synonymous with community philanthropy. Today, HPCH hosts public and private events and educational and cultural programs. Wedding receptions are held there. Baptisms and bar mitzvahs. Baby naming ceremonies and 50-year wedding anniversary celebrations. The Art Center Highland Park is a tenant, as is the Improv Playhouse.

"I love my job," says Horwitch, a University of Illinois graduate (speech communications major and Spanish minor, after majoring in dance for her first year and a half in Champaign). "I am surrounded by the arts, by artists, and I get to use my communications skills. How fortunate am I? I have always been a grateful person, and I could not be more grateful than I am for the job

The HPHS graduate met her future husband, Mark, a Deerfield High School graduate and a lawyer, at the University of Illinois. They have two sons, ages nine and six. The father took his sons to the Highland Park-Deerfield prep football game last month, the mother's alma mater emerging victorious, 14-0. Wendy's best friends in the world? It's a three-way tie: her husband and her two sisters.

"Do you want to know the most important thing I've tried to convey to my sons?" she asks.

I nod. "It's to be best friends,

now and for the rest of their lives,' she adds. "They're going to need each other. They're going to want to

stay in

touch, share moments. I cherish how close I am to my sisters, how often we communicate. I'm grateful for their

Wendy Horwitch

Horwitch revisits her memories of Siano, the former HPHS dance honcho. Freshman year at HPHS,

a girl named Wendy took a dance class, taught by Siano. The girl paid attention. The teacher inspired the

> "She pushed me, encouraged me," Horwitch recalls. "She believed in me. I had a wonderful experience growing up in Highland Park, and Ginny was a big part of that experience. I will always appreciate what she did for me at a young age. Dance was my passion at a young age, and my mentor helped me develop that passion."

Every other year, HPHS presents

HS presents FOCUS on the Arts, a three-day, four-night fine arts festival. The next one is slated for the spring of 2017. There is a dance committee, in charge of organizing workshops and curating professional dancers to perform during the festival. The committee held its first meeting this month.

In attendance?

An eager, expressive, diligent Wendy Horwitch, no surprise. She can't wait for the start of the 2017

FOCUS on the Arts. She can't wait for the start of the next dance committee meeting.

"It has been a strength at Highland Park High School for the longest time," Horwitch, a North Shore School of Dance product, says of the high school's arts program. "I like to praise it every chance I get, because kids need an outlet, need opportunities, to express themselves and find their talents. Is there a better way to do those things than through the arts?"

Movies thrill Horwitch. Move her. Her favorite flicks of all-time, if you put her on the spot and ask her to name them, are Dirty Dancing and Flashdance. Her destination for movies, her Blockbuster Video (RIP), is the Highland Park Public Library. Her favorite form of an outdoor escape is a long walk with either a family member or a friend.

Horwitch has settled in nicely and comfortably, at the corner of Contentment and Appreciation.

Point — make that, pointe — to dance for that location.

"Dance," she says, "gave me a lot of confidence when I was young, and that has carried over into my professional life. Energy, positive energy, is important to me. You know what they say, 'Attitude is altitude.' Carry that light into a room."





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