

## SENIORS SHAKE THEIR GROOVE THING



Photos by Gale Horton Gay

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Back in the day, they may have been stomping at the Savoy Ballroom in New York City or getting down here in the ATL at Mr. V's. So what happened to those hot dudes and chicks who spent their youth sweating and dancing the night away.

Some are still doing just that (sort of) but with a major change of venue.

Despite the gray in their hair and limbs that aren't nearly as flexible as they once were, senior citizens have been flocking to the twice a week line dancing classes at the Lou Walker Senior Center in Lithonia.

While DJ **James Brunson** keeps the "grown folks" music pulsing, seniors like 60-year-old **Cecelia Walker** of Decatur step and turn to the beat.

"I like to dance," said Walker, who also takes yoga and low-impact aerobics at the center. "It gives you something to do. You move around. You are not idle."

Walker, who likes to freestyle and is extremely energetic on the floor, is not a fan of slow songs. She needs something fast to do the Gangsta Slide or the Cuban Shuffle.

And Walker, who's been coming to the sessions since the center opened three and a half years ago, said dancing beats sitting home watching TV or the grandkids.

**J.D. Hall** of Lithonia agrees. "This right here is therapy to your body and mind. If everybody danced, they'd live longer. When you dance, you are happy," said Hall.

As **R. Kelly's Happy People** winds down, Brunson announces that it's "cool-down time" and plays a slow number, **Luther Vandross' Dance With My Father**. The dance floor, which at times reaches 50 or so dancers, clears slightly but many continue to sway and move in syncopated movements along with the others.



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James Brunson is a master at picking music to energize the crowd.



From flats to hats, seniors come adorned to get down.

## Dancing

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When that song fades and the upbeat *Walk It Out* by DJ Unk blares, dancers crowd the floor again and now hips are gyrating and arms moving rhythmically.

While women far outnumber the men, no one seems to mind since line dancing doesn't require partners. With the dancing at the center taking place in what also serves as the dining hall and multipurpose room, some seniors watch the dancers and others are playing cards while eating their lunch and some don't seem to notice at all.

**Senella Watson**, who is a dance instructor at another facility, said she comes to Lou Walker classes for the exercise.

"It's really a good, great environment," said Watson.

Line dance instructor **Sylvia Bailey**, who for most of the class is on the stage periodically leading the dancers and calling out moves, said there's no ulterior motive to the class. "We're just having fun," said Bailey. There are physical and mental benefits, she explained, pointing out that keeping time with music helps with memory.

Line dancing classes are held at the Lou Walker Senior Center weekly on Tuesday and Thursdays. The center also offers an advanced line dancing class on Fridays as well as Caribbean dance and square dance classes.

