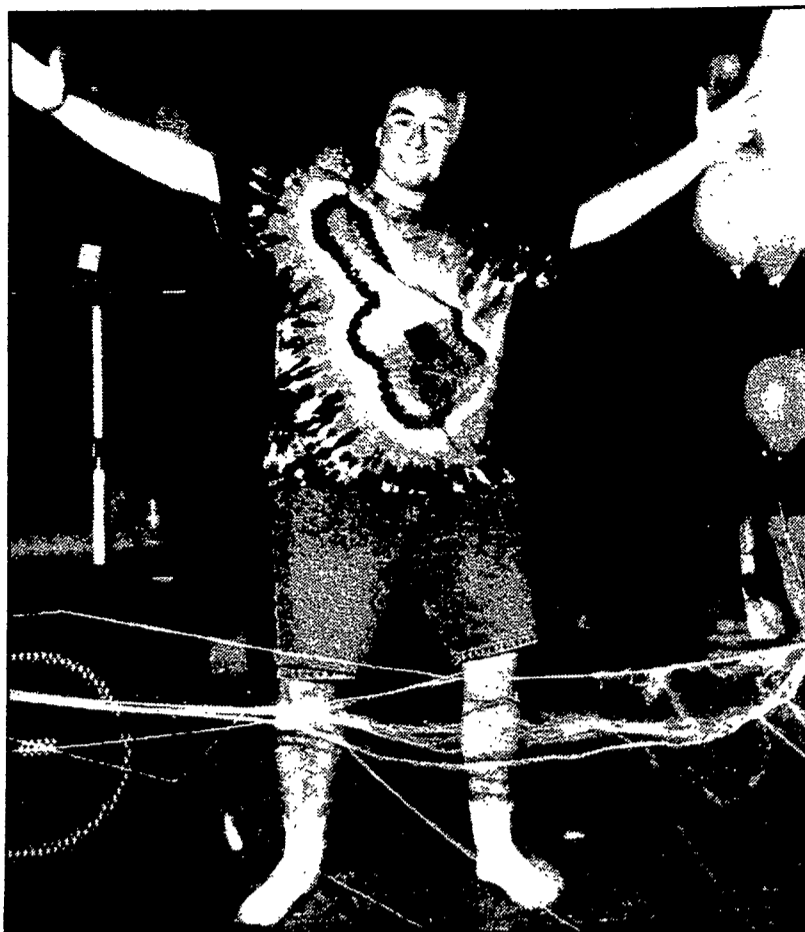


# MOVE on the



Pete Tarkulich displays his shirt and his dancing style during the Oct. 25 dance marathon at St. John the Evangelist School, Spencerport.

**B**ridget Flint acknowledges that she didn't take up dancing because she showed signs of obvious talent.

"My parents thought I was so uncoordinated, I was going to fall out of my chair," Bridget said of her first lesson at the age of 3. "They thought lessons would make me more coordinated."

Funny how things turn out. Bridget, now 16, is an accomplished tap dancer and hopes to major in dancing at college.

Bridget noted that many teenagers do feel they lack natural dancing ability. Yet if they dare to get into the groove, she said, they might be pleasantly surprised.

"Once you get out there on the floor, you can't stop," said Bridget, a parishioner at St. Mary's Church in Rexville.

Fast or slow, solo or in groups, traditional or trendy, teens interviewed for this story said dancing can be enjoyed in its many different forms.

Take Nicole Hahn, for instance. She said some of her fondest dancing moments occurred in her own living room.

"My mom and I would dance together when I was little. We used to blast the radio to Jon Bon Jovi songs," said Nicole, 14, from St. John the Evangelist Church in Spencerport.

## From flat-footed

# Every

Stephanie Knittel has also grown up with dancing. She began taking lessons at age 3 and now enters dance competitions regularly. She said she spends several hours per week polishing her skills in

such forms of dance as ballet, point, jazz, lyrical and solo.

"I just want to keep going with it," said Stephanie, 13.

Stephanie also embraced a new form of dance last year, right in her parish: liturgical dancing. She's part of a four-member troupe from Henrietta's Church of the Good Shepherd that performs during parish holiday Masses and children's liturgies, as well as at diocesan youth Masses.

With vocal and instrumental accompaniment, the Good Shepherd dancers glide through expressive, spiritual movements during portions of these liturgies, Stephanie explained.

"It makes me feel good; the people really get into it. It feels like a form of prayer," Stephanie said.

Stephanie added that liturgical dancing has been a nice break from the competitive atmosphere she normally faces.

"When you're in the church and you mess up, it's OK. It's not like you get 10 points off," Stephanie said.

Joan Workmaster, diocesan director of liturgy, said only a few parishes currently have liturgical dance groups. However, she hopes that more youths — and adult leaders — will consider the possibility of liturgical dancing.

"Liturgy is when we bring whatever talent we have to the prayer. And for many young people, that talent is in

dancing," Workmaster said. "This is a legitimate liturgical ministry."

On the other hand, less experienced dancers might feel more comfortable just heading to church halls or high-school gyms for weekend dances. The biggest hurdle for many people at these events, Stephanie observed, is simply getting started.

"You don't have to be perfect to enjoy it. You just *move*. It comes naturally," Stephanie said. She added that she enjoys attending teen dances in addition to her competitive dancing.

Nicole suggested that skittish teens might feel more comfortable by attending dances "with a bunch of friends. Then, once they get out there (dancing), you'll get out there."

Bridget, also, recognizes that some folks may need a little nudge. So she often appoints herself as chief instigator at dances.

"I'm the one who's in the center of the dance floor most of the time when nobody else is out there," she laughed. "I'm the one trying to grab people out of the bleachers; too."

Brian Kwiecien said he was a likely candidate "to stand against a wall" when he first attended teen dances. But after a few dances, he no longer needed coaxing.

"It wasn't that hard. I had lots of fun," said Brian, 17, from St. Mary of the Assumption Church in Scottsville.

However, Brian continues to harbor mixed feelings about certain styles of dancing. For instance, he absolutely refuses to get involved in square dancing — or, as he called it, "that country stuff." He also shows limited enthusiasm for the neck-twisting, "head-banging" dancing that often accompanies grunge and heavy metal music.

"It kind of hurts after a while," Brian acknowledged.

Brian said he favors dancing on crowded floors because that helps him remain inconspicuous.

"I just like to be around a lot of

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