

PEI

P.E.I. dance class provides emotional and physical benefits to people with Parkinson's

Dancing with Parkinson's founder hopes people feel 'limitless possibility in their own expression'

Shane Ross - CBC News - Posted: Nov 19, 2023 5:21 PM EST | Last Updated: 5 hours ago



Instructors and dancers show their moves in the Dancing with Parkinson's class on Sunday in Charlottetown. (Stacey Janzer/CBC)

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They stomped their feet, clapped their hands and waved their arms.

They danced sitting down and standing up.

They busted some moves they didn't even know they had.

When the music stopped, it was clear the special dance class on P.E.I. for people with Parkinson's disease was a resounding success.

"I really enjoyed it," said Earl Power, who was diagnosed with Parkinson's in early 2017.

"I know as the day went on I got better with my movements."



Volunteer Anna Lacroix and dancer Earl Power say they both enjoyed the Dancing with Parkinson's class. (Stacey Janzer/CBC)

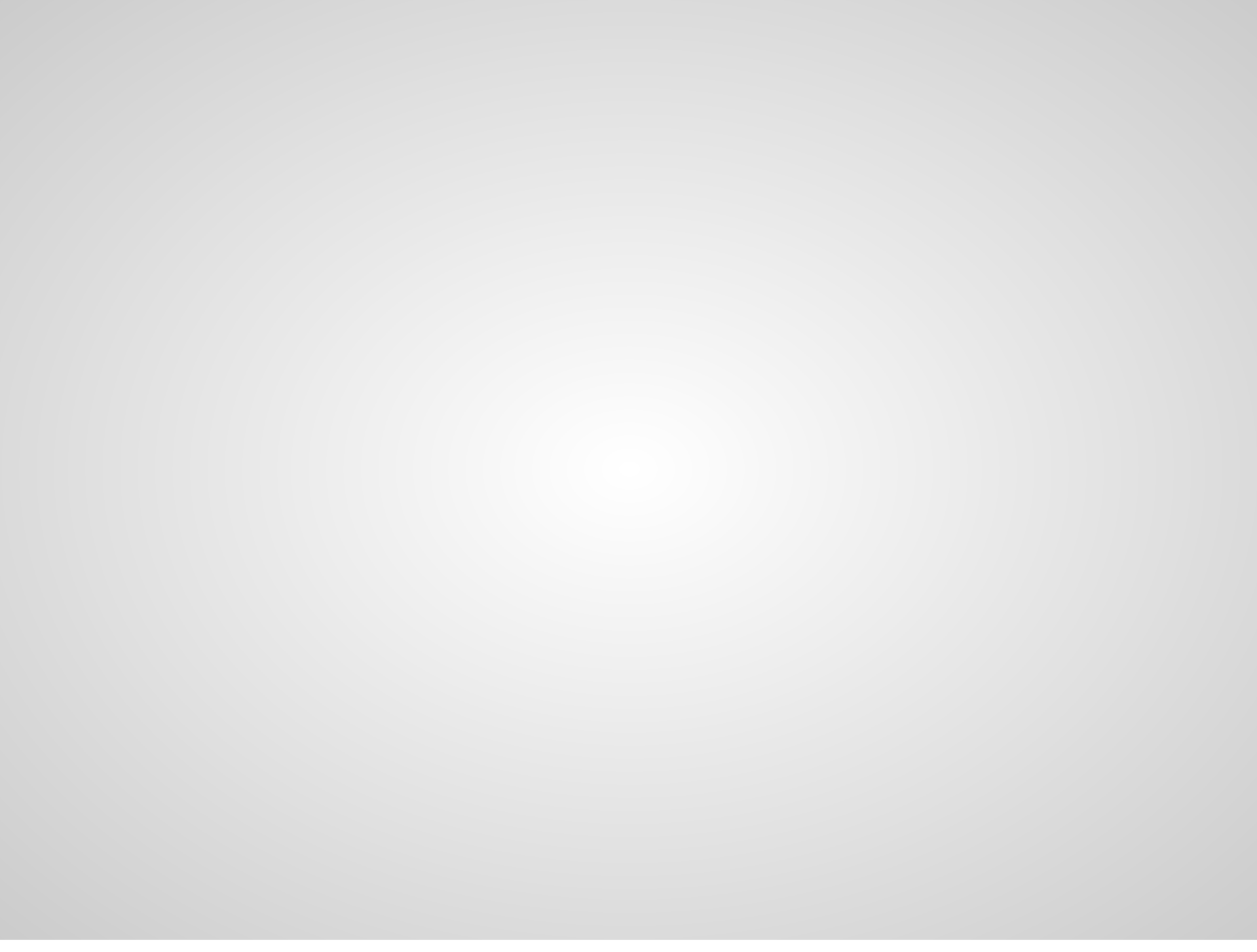
Dancing with Parkinson's is a registered charity that offers online and in-person dance classes that are free of charge for participants, and specifically designed to provide physical and emotional benefits to seniors and people living with Parkinson's.

It began in Toronto 15 years ago and has spread to other parts of the country, including P.E.I. this weekend.

Not seen as patients

Founder Sarah Robichaud said people who come to the class aren't seen as patients, but rather artists and dancers.

"We really work to actually hope that people can feel this limitless possibility in their own expression, in their own artistry and honestly just come together, see their friends, make new friends."



Sarah Robichaud founded Dancing with Parkinson's 15 years ago in Toronto. This weekend, she brought the in-person program to P.E.I. for the first time. (Stacey Janzer/CBC)

Parkinson's disease is a progressive disorder that affects the nervous system and parts of the body controlled by the nerves. Symptoms include tremors and a decreased ability to perform unconscious movements such as smiling or swinging your arms when you walk.

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There is no known cure.

There is evidence already that exercise, especially strenuous activity, builds muscle and brain power in people with Parkinson's. [The data on dancing is preliminary but also promising.](#)

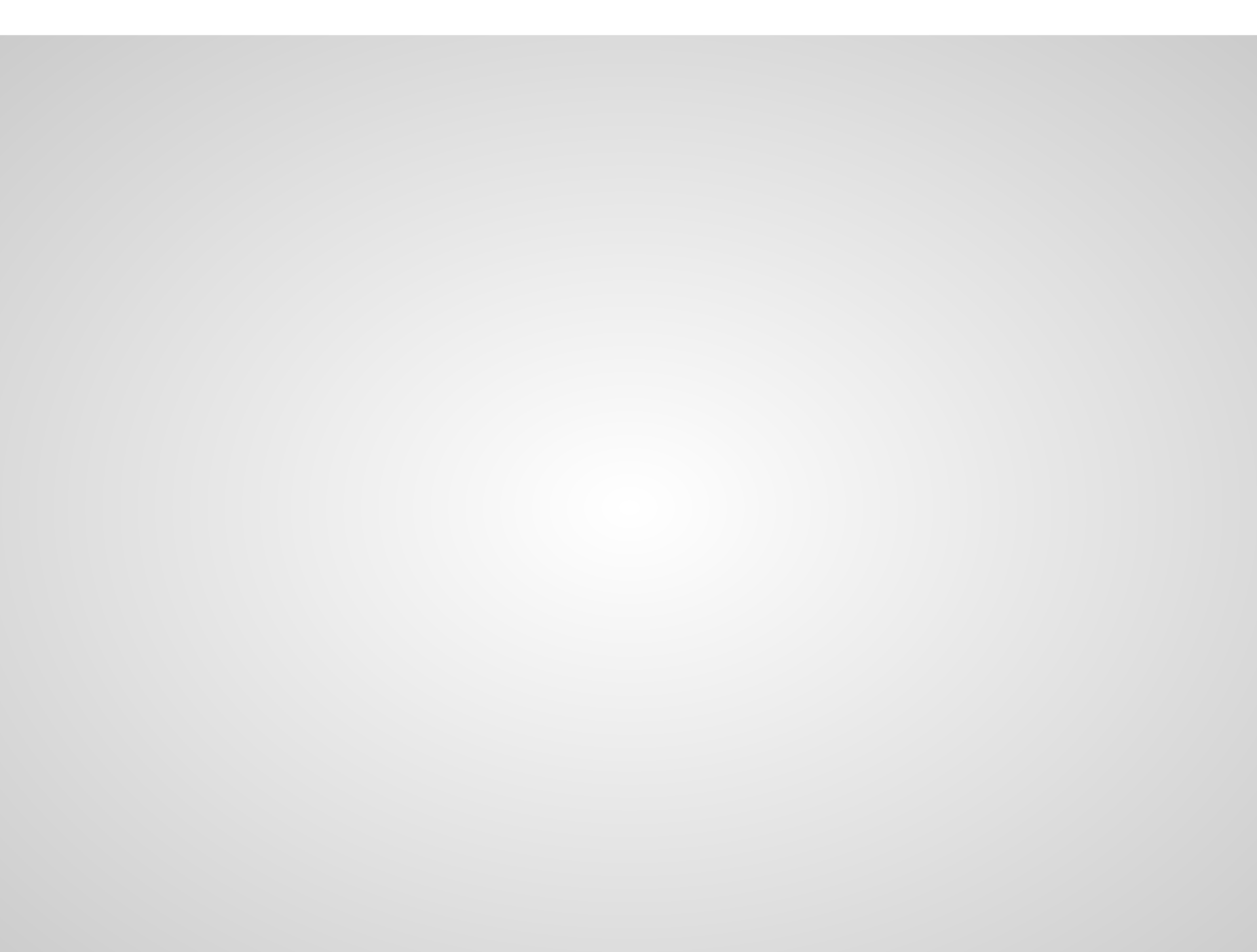
“Just the idea of that mind-body connection, I know how important it is.”

— Anna Lacroix

Power said normally simple tasks like buttoning a shirt can be difficult, and people from his local support group often share tips on how to manage the disease.

He was happy to see some of those people at the dance class.

"It's just nice to see everybody that I go to the support group with here, trying to get the best they can, their movement and whatnot so it's great."



In-person dance classes will be offered once a week in the new year through the P.E.I. Parkinson Association. (Stacey Janzer/CBC)

Online classes are offered every day on the Dancing with Parkinson's [website](#). In-person classes will be offered once a week in the new year in Charlottetown through the P.E.I. Parkinson Association, a Charlottetown-based outreach and support group for people and their families that are affected by Parkinson's disease.

Anna Lacroix signed up as a volunteer dance instructor and was learning about the program this weekend.

"If somebody wants to dance with me I'll dance with them," she said.

"Just the idea of that mind-body connection, I know how important it is. And you know I value everyone in our community and if we can contribute something to the wellbeing of our community I want to be a part of it in any way that I can."

With files from Stacey Janzer

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