



*Attendees at the free movement class for persons with Parkinson's disease held May 31, 2014 during the Dance for PD training workshop at UF's School of Theatre + Dance. Photo By Megan Reeves*

On May 30-June 1, 2014 UF's Center for Arts in Medicine and the School of Theatre + Dance partnered with the Mark Morris Dance Group and the Brooklyn Parkinson Group to host Dance for PD, a training and professional development workshop for dancers, dance teachers, students, therapists and allied health professionals. Twenty-three people from all over Florida, Georgia, Massachusetts and South Carolina and with varied backgrounds, including professional dancers, physical therapists, occupational therapists, fitness instructors and students from UF and FSU participated.

On Saturday, May 31, more than 30 people attended a free movement class for people with Parkinson's disease and their friends, family members and caretakers. David Leventhal, founding teacher and program director for Dance for PD, who has traveled the world teaching the class that empowers attendees to explore movement and music, led the class as well as the overall three-day training.

Attendees participated in a series of dances led by Leventhal and enjoyed live musical accompaniment. Leventhal explained that music plays a large role in initiating movement of the body in addition to helping with the body's balance and timing.

Leventhal also encouraged attendees to bring family and friends to classes such as this, as one of the benefits to using dance in a group setting is the social component.



*David Leventhal instructs attendees at the Dance for PD free movement class. Photo By Megan Reeves*

Jill Sonke, director of UF's Center for Arts in Medicine, said that she was thrilled to have the Mark Morris Dance Group join UF again. Emily Pozek, dancer in residence in UF Health Shands' Arts in Medicine, echoed Sonke's enthusiasm and said that the workshop was a huge success.

"The event brought together a diverse community of artists, professionals and students to share and learn about dance and Parkinson's disease," said Pozek. "The partnership with David Leventhal and Dance for PD brings this workshop to the University of Florida and provides hands-on learning for not only artists but our dancers within the Dance for Life program here in Gainesville."

Suzanne Salapa, chair of the Department of Dance at Valencia College in Orlando, Florida, and one of this year's Dance for PD workshop attendees said that by the end of the weekend you didn't *want* the opportunity to merge the art of dance with those with Parkinson's disease in your town, but you knew you *needed* this experience to be an integral part of your destiny.

"I was awestruck by the expertise of our workshop leader, David Leventhal, and his knowledge in his field," said Salapa. "Every class, every lecture, every exercise was carefully crafted for our success to take back for application to our own environment."