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Seniors to put on dancing shoes

By Jordan Gass-Poore New Braunfels Herald-Zeitung

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Area residents can rub a buckle or scoot a boot to the musical styling of the Texarkana-based Buster Ellisor Band from 6-9 p.m. June 22 at the Comal County Senior Citizens' Foundation Center during its monthly country dance.

Although the event and refreshments are free, a donation in the foundation's pair of cowboy boots puts participants in the running for door prizes sponsored by Hope Hospice. Funds raised will go toward the center's building operations.

"They love the country music," said Debbie Maddon, center membership coordinator for the foundation. "They request more waltzes and two-steps."

Ken Lowery, vice president of operations for the foundation, echoed Maddon's sentiments.

"They have a ball (and) their families are grateful," he said.

Foundation member Shelby Violante has attended all of the country dances, which began in February and initially took place at the center on Fridays as a way to encourage membership to socialize and become more physically active.

Violante said it was her desire to learn how to square dance, and the classes she took at the center attracted her to the monthly event.

"I've always wanted to learn how to square dance and, since my husband died, I've taken classes," she said, coming off the heels of her recent certification to teach the dance as part of the center's first graduating class.

The center's square dancing classes, along with other programs, were implemented by Maddon two years ago.

Since then, Maddon said she has seen a significant improvement in foundation member morale.

“There’s just smiley people now,” said the Colorado native, who has a knack for remembering foundation members’ names and interests.

The country dances have not only provided Violante with the opportunity to “cut a rug,” but to have fun and make friends.

Maddon said Violante has found dancing partners in foundation members who attend the monthly event who may feel more comfortable sitting on the sidelines.

“We’re like kids in high school,” said Violante, who added her group of friends will try to make sure they sit together during the event by saving seats for one another. “The people are so nice.”

Violante’s inclusive nature may have led to her being elected treasurer of the foundation’s board of directors.

The foundation serves more than 1,300 active members in New Braunfels and Schertz.

For more than 28 years, it has provided services for people age 50 and older, including an activity and fitness center, day care, home safety repairs and modifications, as well as the New 2 U resale stores, whose funds go toward its Meals On Wheels program.