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Swampscott

NEIGHBORS

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My Place of Solace - *Meet Judy Moynihan*



Cover Photo: Lucica Ciuc, Gold Feather Photography



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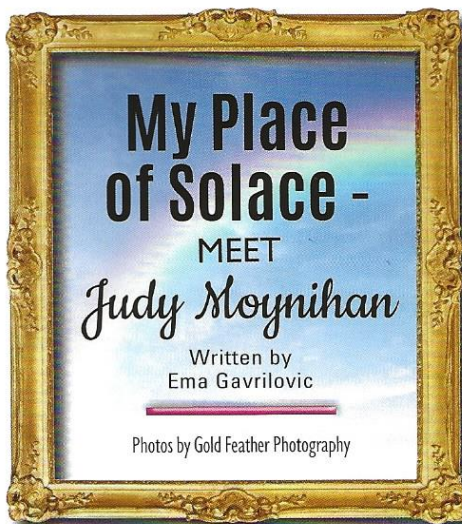
Building Relationships Between Residents and Businesses



As a volunteer for a local ballet studio for over 40 years Judy Moynihan's hobby keeps her on her toes. Ever appreciative of any art her weekly regimen welcomes it: from painting beautiful watercolors, dancing in multiple weekly classes, or strolling across the sandy, and still cold, vivid beach front with her singer husband the daily scenes around her amplify her imagination.

Ballet was an ever-lasting dream, although the amount of practice fluctuated over time the passion remained for this elegant artform. As a child, Moynihan, like other little girls, read fairy tales and dreamed of dancing in pink tutus. When she read these novels, she envisioned fantastic scenes in her mind, ripe with gallant princes, full-gowned queens and dainty fairies. "I used to like the story type ballets."

At the age of seven years her family enrolled her in her first ballet class. Donning her first leotard and ballet slippers, ballet was not only elegant it was also an entertaining pastime. Once she turned 11 years old, she realized most of her classmates had better technique. Sadly, Moynihan quit attending class.



As the years went by, high school, then college passed and ballet continued to beckon in the back of her mind. Finally, the full-time load of graduate school and work finally convinced her to seek solace in a familiar hobby. "I thought what can I do that's fun and so that got me back into dance. I figure at that point I was in my thirties, so didn't matter whether I was a dancer or not. And the music is just so beautiful. I just thought this was something I really enjoyed." The year was 1975 and a renewed love for ballet formed

Enrolling in the Marblehead School of Ballet as a recreational dancer was the beginning of a friendship with the school's

director, Paula Shiff. "She stood out as a teacher. This is the best teacher I ever had, frankly! She is just so careful with all her students. We've become close friends, and that's wonderful." Weekly, Moynihan takes three classes at the same studio she walked into over 40 years ago. Two classes are in ballet technique. The other is a stretch and strength conditioning class.

As a board member for over four decades for Marblehead School of Ballet's performance team, North Shore Civic Ballet Company,



Moynihan meets regularly with the rest of the members to plan fundraising events and to discuss decisions that affect the company. Throughout the years, volunteering events included a car wash, bake sales, and an auction. In 1977, a flier on the studio's bulletin board asked for volunteers. Their first assignment was to find chairs for a performance piece. Since then, the friendship and commitment to this dance school and team blossomed.

The entire Moynihan family's pleasures include the arts. Her son, Brian is an exception, preferring other activities but her two daughters enjoy art and continue to instill an appreciation for the arts in their children. From a young age Tara and Lauren were enrolled in ballet. Now as adults, their love for dance transpires into a bonding family time by attending performances. Lauren, who lives in Chicago with her two sons, ages nine and 12, attends performances with them. In the beginning of March, Alvin Ailey, a professional dance company from New York, was touring and performed in Chicago, to the delight of the family. The boys enjoyed seeing the creative expression the dancers depicted with their fluid movement.

Moynihan's husband, John, also shares a passion for the arts as he is a member of the Apollo Singers, the country's second oldest men's singing group. The couple is an active team who exercise together and help each other with housework. "He's a great cook. He makes all kinds of main dishes: chicken, fish, mainly that. I do the dishes," she laughs. Activity keeps them content and close: from visiting museums to guided bird watching tours, cultural activities such as these energize them and open their creativity.

Indeed, Moynihan's artistic personality trait continues to shine. "Something I've always liked is art," she reflects in her home decorated with her own watercolor paintings. Preferring realism art, the latest creation centers on her son's mother in law's Washington D.C. home. The list of future ideas includes a polar bear and other historic homes. Moynihan draws inspiration from friends' and family's historic homes as well as pretty calendar art.

"When I finished my graduate degree the first thing I did is take a painting course. I've been doing it since then." Weekly, paint brushes in hand, a trip to the Marblehead Senior Center for a day of craftsmanship with cherished neighbors ensues. While there, a

typical painting class begins with everyone painting a theme of choice to practice brushwork. One time, Moynihan painted a land with tiny fairies since the little creatures symbolize her ballet journey.

In class, neighbors chat and bond over their art, delightedly view each other's work and show off their own art. "We enjoy seeing each other. To me it's more pleasant than painting by yourself." After immersing herself in this weekly itinerary Moynihan became the co-president of Swampscott Art Association, which she still helps run to this day.

Now, as the pandemic has forced people to social distance the arts have migrated to an online format. However, that does not stop this dedicated artist. Even now, she spends her days painting, taking walks, and dancing over the video platform, Zoom.

"We're having zoom classes and I thought what's this going to be like? Ended up getting really kinda sore from it and I wasn't expecting that." Eagerness to resume to in-person sessions, however, remained. "I can't wait till we are all back together again." Certainly, dancers are eager to socialize in the studio. Always the social butterfly, preferring group activities to solo hobbies a group ballet class with her closest friends and a painting class with her teacher by her side are the preferred norm.

Despite the temporary closure of her dance studio and senior center the busy lifestyle resumes as she spends time with John and paints at home as he rehearses. Since their residence is close to the Atlantic Ocean, the couple likes to take walks along the beach as they soak in the beautiful scene of sea with its gentle shoreline and sky with its changing colors and shifting clouds. "I'm lucky to still have my husband around, best company, too."

However, she is happy that she pursues ballet despite years of training taking a toll on her body. Arthritis has affected her joints and Moynihan has had multiple surgeries. Despite knee replacements, one hip replacement, and one shoulder replacement her condition does not halt her from her ballet activity and its intricate movements. "I still take class. People say, 'are you gonna do that?' I say, 'yes, I am!'"

All things have a beginning and an ending, and now, in retirement with John, Moynihan reminisces on her professional career as a speech pathologist. After receiving her Bachelor of Arts degree in the University of Connecticut and then obtaining her master's degree at Philadelphia's Temple University she centered her career on providing services at local schools for ages three to 22. The children met either in small groups or individually, and all had speech impediments or cognitive disabilities.

Although continuing education during her retirement remains possible Moynihan believes this chapter in her life is closing. "I don't feel I am going to be doing that anymore. I paid my dues to the American Speech Language and Hearing Association but I'm not gonna be practicing at this point in my life."

Knowing she helped children to the best of her abilities Moynihan retired from her career. Now, she explores the essence of her identity. Her supportive family acknowledges her appreciation for the arts and ballet embodies her lifestyle. "I think I would be depressed without it."

