

## **Charlene Schade: Empowering Others Through Fitness**



This month's Successful Ager in Action spotlight shines upon Charlene Schade, a San Diegan dancer, author, physical trainer, and educator who has devoted her life to improving the well-being of children and older adults through exercise. At the remarkable age of 87, Charlene continues to inspire and motivate older adults in her health and fitness classes at the San Diego College of Continuing Education (SDCCE), where she also serves as the Emeritus Assistant Program Chair.

The Emeritus Program provides adults 55+ with lifelong learning opportunities specifically designed to promote positive aging. The mission of this program is to encourage older adults (55+) to stay intellectually stimulated, socially engaged, and physically fit. To achieve this, they offer classes in art, drama, literature, music, and exercise, empowering their students to remain independent, engaged in the community, and, if they wish, to return to the workforce. Charlene is a vital member of the Fall Prevention Task Force, a San Diego County Health and Human Services program that aims to reduce falls and their impact on older adults in our community. Thus, she includes strengthening poses in her classes to increase reflexes and prevent falls. Additionally, Charlene assists with the Aging and Independence Services Feeling Fit Club Trainings, offering a safe and empowering environment for fun, exercise, and improvement of health. The Aging and Independence Services (AIS) also provides Tai Chi for Arthritis and Fall Prevention and Tai Chi for Better Balance classes and organizes local walking groups. They also offer educational classes for managing chronic pain, diabetes, and various conditions. As a member of organizations such as the California Association for Health Physical Education Recreation and Dance (CAHPERD) and IDEA Health & Fitness Association since 1984, she continues to be professionally active. And she finds companionship and support as a member of the Torrey Pines Ski Club (TPSC) and the San Diego Widow and Widowers

(WOW) club. When not teaching, Charlene performs with the Prime Time Steppers, a senior dance group she co-founded in 1991, and spends time with her friends and family.

Charlene's passion for fitness and dance seems to have been ingrained in her from birth, given that her parents met on the ballroom floor. She enjoyed dancing, skiing, roller skating and other fitness activities growing up, eventually earning a Bachelor of Science degree and a K-14 teaching credential in physical education from UCLA, after starting at UC Berkeley. Charlene began her career teaching dance and physical fitness for junior high and highschool students at Los Angeles City schools before becoming an author. She wrote two exercise-focused books for young children, *Move with Me from A to Z* and *Move With Me 1,2,3*, both of which have accompanying audio cassettes with music to encourage movement. Charlene spent ten years presenting her books to various schools in San Diego. She also was the director of the Kindergym program at the YMCA in La Jolla for five years.

Later in her career, Charlene switched to working with older adults at the San Diego College of Continuing Education, where she has been for the past forty-six years. She also held a position as an Arthritis Foundation Exercise Program Trainer for nearly fifteen years. Continuing to serve her students in the best way possible, she co-wrote another book called *Prime Time Aerobics*, a dance manual tailored to older adults.



Charlene has received numerous awards and recognitions for her dedication to empowering others through fitness, including the Live Well San Diego Public Health Champion Award and the Empowering Teacher Award at SDCCE. She was also honored with the Excellence in Programming Award from the American

Alliance for Health, Physical Education, and Dance. She served as a consultant on the Governor's Council for Physical Fitness and Health. She also appeared on the KFMB-TV program *Dance Your Ages Off*. While these accolades are undoubtedly well-deserved, they may not fully capture the impact Charlene has had on the California community. Nonetheless, this article aims to express gratitude for her contributions.

Charlene's lifelong commitment to her passions is a remarkable inspiration. She describes dance and exercise as having helped her past self, present self, and future self. I encourage every reader to seek out their passion, the thing that truly ignites their spirit, as Charlene has done.



*“Keep moving, dancing, and treasuring every moment”*

*- Charlene*

Charlene is grateful for the many years she was able to travel in the US and abroad to Switzerland, Germany, Austria, Italy, Brazil, Argentina, and many others. Skiing at the Matterhorn is a treasured memory. One trip on her “Bucket List” is a River Cruise Trip down the Danube.