

news

Dance for Parkinson's

Jessica Conneely takes great delight in the way her dance classes help people who struggle with Parkinson's disease.

"Dance is particularly beneficial for people with Parkinson's," she says.

"Research points to cognitive, physical and social benefits – regular dance and movement sessions can improve quality of life and bring connection and joy to many."

Ms Conneely, who started Dance for Parkinson's classes in the Hunter Region in 2017, will host a free community class this month.

It aims to raise awareness of Parkinson's disease and encourage people to participate in the 60th anniversary of the NSW Seniors Festival, which will go from 4 to 15 April.

Ms Conneely's classes are modelled on the Dance for PD

program, developed by the Mark Morris Dance Group and the Brooklyn Parkinson Group in New York.

After moving into the arts and health sectors, Ms Conneely has since received a Create NSW 2017 Innovative Dance Practice grant.

It will allow her to travel to the United Kingdom in July to study best practice.

"The UK and America are more progressive in this field, so I hope to bring back knowledge to pass on and train others in the field," she says.

The free community class and a morning tea will take place on World Parkinson's Day (Wednesday 11 April) from 10am until 11.30am at Lake Macquarie Performing Arts Centre, Lake Street, Warners Bay.

Apart from the dance class, the Newcastle Parkinson's Support



Jessica Conneely (centre, back) leads a Dance For Parkinson's class at Charlestown. Photo: Peter Stoop

Group has also organised an information stand at Westfield Kotara, adjacent to Woolworths supermarket, from 10am to 4pm on the same day.

The group's booth is part of a #UnitedForParkinsons global campaign, which will provide education on, and support for,

Parkinson's during April. There are currently more than 80,000 people living with the disease in Australia, while one in five are diagnosed before the age of 50.

For more on the NSW Seniors Festival, go to seniorsfestival.nsw.gov.au and search 'events'.

- Ben Murphy