

By Kenneth Knight | Tribune Staff

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## Awards to honor members of Tampa's Salsa Community



A salsa dancing class is seen in this undated handout photo courtesy of Carlos Rodriguez taken at Dance World in Tampa. The inaugural Salsa Community Awards 2013 The event recognizes the talents and efforts of area residents in the dance community.

NORTH TAMPA - Grace Badillo wants to pay tribute to a collection of dancers, choreographers and volunteers, including several veterans in Tampa's salsa community, for their contributions to the dance scene.

She is organizing a Tampa salsa community awards event to recognize those who Badillo considers unsung heroes.

"There are certain people who do good things for the community through dance but never get any recognition for it," said Badillo, co-owner of Dance World, a dance studio in University Mall.

The debut of the 2013 Salsa Community Awards is set for 6 p.m. today as part of the grand reopening of Dance World on the first floor of the mall adjacent to Burlington Coat Factory. The studio previously leased space near Dillard's Clearance Center at the mall at 2200 E. Fowler Ave.

The three-hour, relocation celebration and awards program will be hosted in partnership with Dancing With Grace on National Dance Day Weekend.

Badillo, an award-winning dance instructor, sees the awards program as a way to draw attention to salsa, a popular dance style influenced by dancers of Hispanic, Caribbean and African heritage.

Salsa, a spirited dance with roots in Cuban culture, incorporates spins, shimmies, quick footwork, and smooth hip and arm movements.

The dance is prominent in Tampa's Latin community. It's a popular pastime performed at nightclubs and parties frequented by people of Cuban, Latin American and Caribbean American heritage.

Salsa dance enthusiasts can find a place in Tampa to dance nearly every night of the week, said Carlos Rodriguez, who co-owns Dance World along with Badillo.

"Dancing gives you life," said Rodriguez, referring to the physical benefits associated with the art form.

"There are only a few certified (salsa) teachers in the United States," Badillo said. "There are four certified instructors in Tampa, and we have two of them here at Dance World."

Though most of the award recipients are active in the salsa dance community, others are being highlighted for their commitment to community service or other forms of dance.

Among the honorees will be Maria Sevilla, a flamenco dancer and artistic director at the Columbia Restaurant. She started working at the Columbia in 1989. Sevilla will receive the Lifetime Achievement Award.

"Maria has been doing the choreography for dance at the Columbia Restaurant for about 25 years," Badillo said, adding that she believes the honor is long overdue.

Salsa dance enthusiast Juanita Hoyle considers herself an unlikely choice for the Salsera of the Year award.

"I'm a little embarrassed," Hoyle said. "I'm not one for being in the spotlight."

Hoyle started taking salsa lessons in Baltimore 10 years ago when Badillo worked at a dance studio there. Hoyle, who always loved to dance, was inspired to learn salsa as part of a bucket list item sparked by an illness.

"What we love about her is not only does she dance, she (Hoyle) is a Hillsborough County guardian ad litem who takes care of children," Badillo said.

Hoyle is typical of this year's salsa community award recipients. Badillo selected a host of honorees who work as volunteers or showcase their talents behind the scenes in the salsa dance community.

"I want to honor people for keeping their word and having integrity in the dance community," Badillo said.

The grand reopening also will include awards for Salsa DJ of the Year; Orquesta, or band, of the Year; Female Salsa Student of the Year; and Male Salsa Student of the Year. Guests who arrive at the reopening celebration before 7:30 p.m. today will get a chance to cast votes to select a winner in those four categories.

For information about the Dance World studio, visit its website at [www.danceworldtampa.com](http://www.danceworldtampa.com), or email Grace Badillo at [Grace@dancingwithgrace.com](mailto:Grace@dancingwithgrace.com) or Rodriguez at [CarlosDanceworld@gmail.com](mailto:CarlosDanceworld@gmail.com).

Juanita Hoyle, a 2013 Salsa Community Awards recipient, left, alongside Grace Badillo, co-owner of Dance World studio and coordinator of the inaugural 2013 Salsa Community Awards.

### **2013 Salsa Community Award Winners**

- Maria Sevilla, Lifetime Achievement Award
- Roberto Lira, Salsa Volunteer of the Year
- Sandra Flores, Outstanding Salsera of the Year
- Lora Crider, AKA, Lora La Fenix, Online Producer of the Year
- Ramon Rodriguez, Salsa Promoter of the Year
- Juanita Hoyle, Salsera of the Year
- Jose Pagan, Salsero of the Year
- Ann Poonkasem, Community Hero and Entertainer of the Year
- Hollie "Madrin'ha" Wolf Madrin'ha Dance, Dance World's Highest Producer of the Year
- Paola Engracia, Dance World's Assistant Instructor of the Year
- Simone Salsa, Tampa's Queen of Dance 2013



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