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**Dance the afternoon away**

**EHS Interact Club, EPRD’s Special Needs Program get their groove on**

By Corinne Westeman

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What luau is complete without a limbo contest, piñatas, dancing and smiles?



Chancey Bush

Lucas Graves, left, Natalie Ostberg, middle, and Peal Hogan, right, listen to the tunes during a luau themed dance hosted by the Evergreen High School Interact Club for the Evergreen Park & Recreation District's Special Needs Program at the Evergreen Lake House Thursday, April 6, 2017.

The Evergreen Lake House was made over to have that luau atmosphere, with multi-colored streamers, palm tree-shaped decorations, ukuleles and leis on Thursday afternoon as the Evergreen High School Interact Club hosted its fourth-annual dance for the Evergreen Park & Recreation District’s Special Needs Program.

About 20 EPRD participants and a dozen Interact members got their groove on to “YMCA,” “Cupid Shuffle” and “Cha Cha Slide,” among other songs. At one point, the whole group participated in a limbo contest, and later, the Interact Club presented two piñatas — one shaped like a turtle; the other like a tropical fish — for some pummeling and candy-spewing.

According to organizers, this is the fourth time Interact has hosted a dance for EPRD’s Special Needs Program. Each year has a different theme.

Chris Dunn of Evergreen, an EPRD participant, donned his Hawaii shirt for the occasion. He said it was his first time attending the dance, which he heard about after the program director sent out an email.

Dunn said he enjoys dancing, with “YMCA.” being among his favorites. As the Interact Club was setting up decorations before the dance, Dunn commented that he was looking forward to “dancing with my friends and meeting new people.”

EPRD participant Devyn Dhieux of Evergreen said that her friend Grace brought her to the dance last year, which was a lot of fun. Dhieux, a sophomore at EHS, said she appreciated her classmates putting this dance on, as it was a great way to spend time with friends.

Matalynn Beebe, 8, of Pine was the de-facto winner of the limbo contest, and the smile on her face showed that she was having fun dancing and playing. Her mother Stacey Beebe said Matalynn has been part of EPRD for about two years, and enjoys swimming, dancing and playing basketball.

“She really enjoys the activities,” Beebe said of Matalynn. “She’s become good friends with others in the program.”

Beebe added that she thought it was “so great that the high school kids put this (dance) on.”

Interact Club co-presidents Angela Heston, a senior, and Tom Biasi, a junior, said the group has been planning the dance since December or January. The two commented that it was one of their favorite events, as they enjoy working with the Special Needs program.

Heston, who has helped with the annual dance all four years, added that, after she graduates, she “wants to come back in a few years and see how (the dance) is going.”

“It’s one of our bigger events,” she said. “We actually plan it as opposed to just participating, and it’s nice to see what you plan happen.”

Maren Schreiber, EPRD special populations coordinator, said the high school students were “very energetic” about interacting with the special needs participants.

“I want to thank the Interact Club; they help us all year round,” she said. “I’m very happy — there’s lots of great energy from both groups.”