

# Folk dancers convening for massive celebration

Folk dancers from California, Illinois, Wisconsin and at least five other states will descend on Dayton this weekend for the 35th anniversary celebration of the Miami Valley Folk Dancers.

"A well kept secret" is how Grace Wolff, longtime member of the group, described the organization of nearly 100 dancers in the Greater Dayton area. Communities represented in the group include Springfield, Franklin, Troy and Yellow Springs. Persons of all ages are involved. The group, Wolff said, provides a "real leveling" activity.

The Miami Valley Folk Dancers began as a folk dance class in 1952. The first workshop followed. Eventually an organized group was formed and the ethnic dancing, singing and food became tradition. Early on, the group's activities attracted fellow folk dancers from around the country.

Dancers meet each Thursday night to rekindle what folk dancing is all about. Wolff explained folk dancing means dancing of the people, adding the dances originated when residents got together for an inexpensive time of singing and

dancing.

Wolff said Slavic dancing now is popular with the group, but that dances from throughout Europe have been performed. Wolff also noted square dancing, a popular entertainment, is an outgrowth of folk dancing.

Through the years, the organization grew — and diversified. From 1957 through 1961, the Dancers opened the winter Sunday Music Series at the Dayton Art Institute. Audience participation in the folk singing was one of the highlights.

Wolff said she became involved with the Dancers when

she was looking for unique activities for her Brownie troop. Folk dancing became one of those activities. Through Wolff's efforts, and the help of other Scout leaders, the Girl Scout folk dance program was started in the 1950s. Wolff became the leader and teacher of the Dancers in 1954 and remained in that capacity until 1967 when she became employed fulltime.

The weekend celebration includes teaching sessions, dancing and other social activities. Saturday events will be held at the Burkhardt Center, Dayton, and Sunday events will be

held at Solomon Pavilion, Dayton.

Miami Valley Folk Dancers is sponsored by the City of Dayton.



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