

# Country Bootleggers Dance Studio Making The Right Moves

*Dance Studio Celebrates 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary*



**By Melissa James**

York County Contributor

If you stepped into this building 25 years ago, you'd be standing in an old paint store. Beneath your feet you would see random swirls of color, surrounded by small, dingy walls. But when Cindy Norge entered for the first time, she only could see potential. Today, that building is large and cheerful. The swirling colors are now dance students moving about the room—some confident, some hesitant, but all stepping up their skills.

Country Bootleggers Dance Studio, located on Highway 17, teaches adults a wide variety of dance styles: ballroom, country & western, line dance, East Coast & West Coast swings, Latin and Irish step dance, as well as Zumba, Piloxing and yoga. Unlike most studios, Country Bootleggers offers different levels of the same style of dance.

"You can come take a beginning class, and then move up to intermediate," said Norge, "so you can grow your ability in that same style of dance. A lot of studios teach a beginning rumba or foxtrot, for example, and then there's nothing more for them to do other than move to a different style of dance."

Another way the business stands out from competitors is in pricing. Norge said she makes great efforts to keep the lessons affordable, so more people can enjoy the experience of dance. It's a unique activity to do with a group of friends or spouse—especially in the case of Norge and her husband, Mike. The couple often travels to compete in the World Swing Dance Council. When they're not dancing or running their own businesses, Cindy and Mike enjoy spending time with their collective six children and nine grandchildren. They are also active at Northside Community Church and Cindy serves on the board of the York County Chamber of Commerce.

"It's not just a dance studio. I truly believe that dancing builds connections. We become friends and we become family. It's the warmth. It's the passion. Everyone says they feel so welcomed when they come in here."

Cindy Norge, Owner



Norge herself grew up in York County, starting dance lessons at age 6. She shifted from ballet, tap and jazz to cheerleading at York High School, then pursued modeling as a young adult. After a modeling gig one evening at a Newport News club, she and her friends decided to stick around and watch the country line dancing lessons that followed. In just a few hours' time, she was hooked. Norge soon became a country line dance instructor.

"I had the passion to dance. I was teaching at different bars and locations, and I just loved giving back to other people what I really enjoy doing. Then this building came open and it was a great opportunity [to have my own studio]. It started as just me, teaching country line dancing," she said.

Before long, she was hiring other instructors and incorporating other styles of dance. She expanded the studio in 2014, gutting the back area to add a second room after she bought out a nearby yoga studio. Both rooms serve double-duty for dance lessons as well as event rentals. The pro instructors teach classes, private lessons and wedding choreography.





Over the years, the business has picked up many awards—including Retail Alliance Small Business of the Year in 2009, York County Small Business of the Year 2010, and “Best Dance Studio” Daily Press Choice Award 2018—but Norge is more focused on her studio’s rewards:

“I can’t talk enough about the County leadership that has provided me with the knowledge and help to grow my business.”

Cindy Norge, Owner

“I love watching people come into the studio with no dance experience, and then watching them walk out knowing how to dance ... building friendships and connections between couples,” she said. “It’s so funny, I’ve been doing this for decades—the men often say, ‘I don’t want to be here, my wife made me come. And then they are the ones who want to come back!’”

Norge also gives back to her community through Dreamcatchers, Relay for Life, Beyond Boobs, and the annual “Williamsburg Dancing with the Stars” fundraiser. She is active with the Peninsula Women’s Network and Business Networking International.

“I feel like I have touched a lot of people’s lives in many different ways,” she said. “I feel like I’ve gained a lot of new friendships and gave instructors different opportunities to grow their business and enjoy their passion. I feel like I’ve given back to the community, and I’ve accomplished more than I ever thought I would.”

