

## The Washington Post

# Urban Beat: Hip-hop classes foster fitness and community

Brickhouse later says the company focuses on the counterculture styles of urban dance and on creating a diverse community of people to share the experience. "When I first started off, it was me and my operations director and a few other people [and] kids hanging out with different groups and different communities. And I wanted to do for them what my mentors did for me," he says, meaning teaching about the history of dance and the foundations of these movements, an education he picked up in his spare time during a decade spent in the U.S. military.

Now there are 42 members of the company, ranging in age from 6 to 43. "We all recognize the different cultural contributions whether we're white, black, Asian or Hispanic," he says.

"So people come through, they are not always dancers," Brickhouse continues. "Sometimes people just like to groove. That's cool, too ... just as long you are willing to learn and be open."

*Sarah Wildman is a freelance writer in Washington. She can be reached at [wpmagazine@washpost.com](mailto:wpmagazine@washpost.com).*

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**URBAN DANCE: Fitness experts weigh in.** (Interviews by Holly E. Thomas)

### The orthopedist: Marc Rankin

[Dance] improves muscle tone, flexibility and reflexes. This type of workout, however, places you at increased risk for ... overuse injuries. I recommend a pre-conditioning program several weeks in advance ... to get the body acclimated. Before beginning the session, focus on a good 15- to 20-minute stretching routine.

### The Dietitian: Jim White

Pre-workout nutrition is important, especially since these are short intense classes. ... I would recommend a light snack at least 45 minutes before a class, such as a piece of fruit, yogurt, small bowl of cereal with skim milk, or a light protein shake. [And do the same] about

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30 minutes after a class or rehearsal.

#### The Cardiologist: Alfred Bove

Urban dance is a combined aerobic and isometric activity, so it's a good whole-body exercise. It won't get you into the same level of conditioning as marathon training, but it is a higher level of intensity, and that can improve your overall peak capacity. There's a bit of risk because of the high-impact aspect for ankles and knees.

#### Know Before You Go

Urban Artistry offers weeknight urban dance classes at \$10 per session and free hip-hop sessions on Sundays from 3 to 6 p.m. at the Dance Institute of Washington, 3400 14th Street NW.

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