

MACOMB DAILY EVENTS

Fred Astaire Studio to host Para Dance Sport training June 23-24



Dance instructors from across southeastern Michigan will be taking part in the first U.S. Para Dance training at Fred Astaire Studio in Bloomfield Hills, June 23-24. Photo courtesy World Para Dance Sport/Paralympic.org/dance-sport

By [Gina Joseph](#), *The Macomb Daily*

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It's been a hot sport in Europe for years.

This weekend Michigan dance instructors will have the opportunity to learn about the Para Dance Sport formerly known as IPC Wheelchair Dance Sport at Fred Astaire Dance Studio in Bloomfield Hills.

"We are proud to be a leader in making dance accessible for everybody," said Evan Mountain, co-owner of the studio hosting the introductory course along with the Rehabilitation Institute of Michigan Foundation and the Dance Mobility program, also co-founded by Mountain and Clinton Township Paralympian Cheryl Angelelli.

The course is designed for ballroom dance instructors interested in learning about how to coach and train individuals with disabilities interested in the sport of wheelchair ballroom dancing. Para Dance Sport is one of several sports that could be added to the 2024 Paralympic Games in Paris. Wheelchair user Els-Britt Larson was one of the pioneers of wheelchair dancing when it originated in her native Sweden in 1968 for recreational and rehabilitation purposes. From there the sport grew in popularity and in 1975 the first competition among 30 couples was held. Two-years ago the sport has been renamed and rebranded from IPC Wheelchair Dance Sport to Para Dance Sport.

Angelelli and her instructor-partner Tamerlan Gadirov will be demonstrating during the event, which has openings for 25 instructors.

"This training course is instrumental in growing the sport of wheelchair ballroom dancing in the United States," said Angelelli, a four-time Paralympic swimming medalist and Para Dance Sport medalist. "So many individuals with disabilities ask 'how can I start taking wheelchair ballroom dance lessons?' Right now, because of the lack of trained dance instructors in the U.S. resources are limited. This training course will open up more opportunities and possibilities for those interested in competing in wheelchair ballroom dancing or just learning social dancing."

Leading the training will be Maricarmen Legaspi, who organized the Mexican Para Dance team and led them to five medals including one gold at the 2017 World Championships. The event featured 170 dancers from 22 countries.

"We're excited to host this ground-breaking training," Mountain said. "It's a perfect fit as our Dance Mobility program in partnership with RIMF is leading the way to bring dance to people of all abilities."

The Fred Astaire Dance Studio Para Dance Training runs Saturday and Sunday, 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Instructors can register for the event by calling 248-454-1715

The studio is at 2172 Franklin Road, Bloomfield Hills. For more information visit fredastaire.com/bloomfield-hills.