

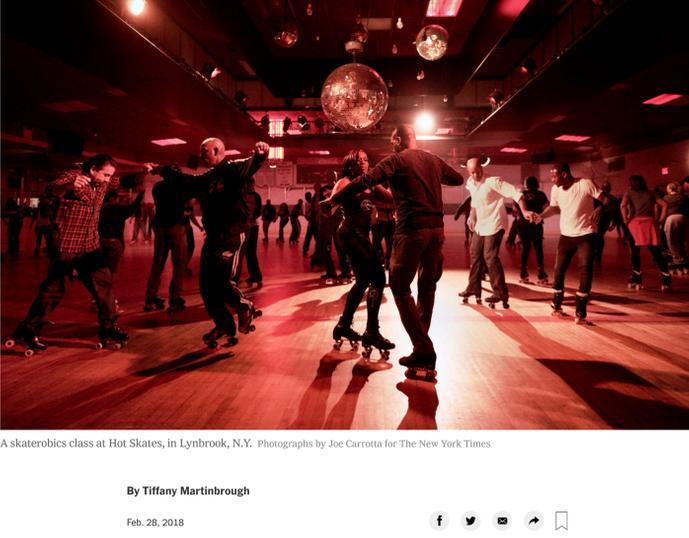
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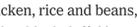
## A Rolling Party Brings the Funk (and Health Benefits)



A skaterobics class at Hot Skates, in Lynbrook, N.Y. Photographs by Joe Carrota for The New York Times

By Tiffany Martinbrough

Feb. 28, 2018



On a recent winter evening outside of the Hot Skates roller rink in Lynbrook, N.Y., Tanya Dean, along with some helpers, walked back and forth from a van carrying pans of fried chicken, rice and beans, beef patties and a three-foot long hoagie. Weighty black duffel bags and two Carvel ice-cream cakes followed.

“It’s to thank everyone for being a part of the class,” she said.

The class is [Skaterobics](#), one of three weekly lessons overseen by Ms. Dean.

Once inside, Ms. Dean, 55, organized the food and unpacked the duffels, which were full of well-worn roller skates. She then plugged her phone into the sound system, unleashing a thumping soundtrack of hip-hop and R&B, and gave her orders: “Everyone start warming up!”

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About 50 people laced up their skates and then began doing laps around the rink in preparation for drills, the repetitive roller movements that make up the core of Skaterobics.



“Skaterobics is a lot,” one instructor said. “You’re gonna work. You’re gonna sweat.”

Ms. Dean watched the attendees, assessing their skill levels. Three other instructors assist Ms. Dean to teach four categories in every class: advanced, intermediate, beginner, and beginner beginner.

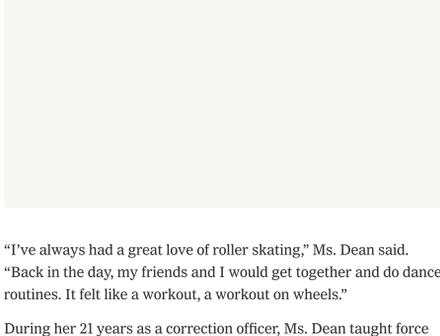
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Once participants were divided by skill level, they started learning their drills, which, on this day, included the “hockey stop” for the intermediates and the “crazy legs” for the advanced. Moves involve sliding, spinning, toe-tapping and backward rolling. Rhythm is not required, but it’s helpful.

The beginners were encouraged to skate faster and to the beat, while the beginner beginners were coached on how not to fall.

This amalgamation of skating, dance and low-impact aerobics is the basis for Skaterobics, which Ms. Dean, a retired New York City Department of Correction officer, started in 2015.

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D.J. E-Kim spins at an after-hours freestyle session, which follows the Friday night Skaterobics class at Hot Skates, in Lynbrook, Long Island.

Joe Carrota for The New York Times

Ms. Dean currently teaches on Tuesday nights and Sunday afternoons at [St. John’s Recreation Center](#) in Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn (classes are free for those with a New York City Department of Parks and Recreation membership). And in 2016, she branched out to teaching Friday nights for a \$15 fee at [Hot Skates](#), the rink on Long Island. Each 90- to 120-minute class consists of nonstop aerobic skating drills; at Hot Skates, it is followed up by a high-energy freestyle session with a D.J.

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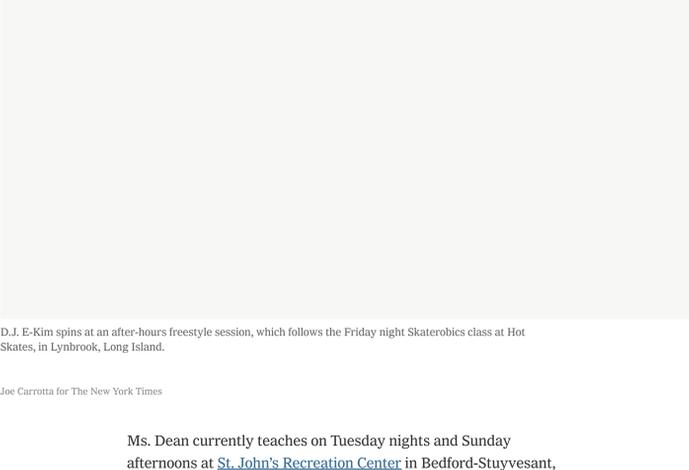
Tracy “Tray” Mitchell, an instructor who works with beginners, has been skating for 20 years.

“Skaterobics is a lot. You’re gonna work. You’re gonna sweat,” he said, without sweating. He then dashed off to groove to a Cardi B song, spinning and dipping to the beat.

In the advanced area, the instructor Simeon Etta was illustrating the finer points of the crazy legs to his students. “Knees touch and the knees touch,” he said, hopping between each knee tap.

Mr. Etta, 39, is from Cameroon, where no one skates, he said.

“I use skating as stress relief,” he added, the collective stomping from his group sounding like the rhythm of a step team.



“Skating makes you feel like a kid again,” said the founder of Skaterobics, Tanya Dean. “You don’t feel like you’re working out.” Above: Wheels for rent at Hot Skates.

“As you’re learning, your body is always trying to fight. You’re using muscles that you haven’t used before,” Mr. Etta said. “It’s based on a lot of cardio, and you’re trying to build your endurance. You’re adding different movements of going backward and forwards.”

There is a core group that comes at least once a week: a mix of firefighters, teachers, politicians, lawyers, boxers and a very limber 81-year-old woman. It was from constant interaction with this crowd that Ms. Dean realized her class provided more than just fitness, leading her to write and self-publish a book, “[The Power of the S.K.A.T.E.](#)”

“Skating helps people through the traumas of life,” she said.

Tamika Anderson, 37, an advanced skater, agreed. “I was diagnosed with cancer and skating is kind of like therapy,” she said.

“It helped me because for a couple of hours, I didn’t have to worry about my health. I was just here and I was having a good time. It is therapeutic.”

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Makeda Armorer-Wade, a beginner in her 40s and the author of “[Crohn’s Interrupted: Living Life Triumphantly](#),” has had Crohn’s disease since she was 16. She started roller skating to build up her stamina, noticing improvements after a few challenging months. At first, she said, she was exhausted. “I couldn’t finish a class. My body ached because I wasn’t able to do anything.” She added, “When you can’t get up and brush your teeth and take a shower, and now to be able to do this — I appreciate life now.”

These stories serve as inspiration for Ms. Dean to continue expanding her program, she said. “The mission is to change, to transform people to become better,” she explained. “Using fun helps lower people’s resistance. Help people be their best self by using roller skating as the vehicle.”

Speeding around the floor during the freestyle session was a guy wearing a T-shirt that said “God. Family. Skate.”

That pretty much sums it up.

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