

# Get Hooped

**B**e careful if you venture into Betty Lucas' exercise class on Monday nights at Rhythmix Cultural Center. You might get "hooped."

The hour-long session offers a full-body workout of hip moving and twirling to lively music with the aid of easily recognizable PVC piping in the shape of a circle. But these are not the Wham-O Hula Hoops from the 1950s. This hooping class uses larger, heavier adult hoops, often made by the hoop teacher herself.

Diagnosed with osteoporosis just a few years ago, Lucas was looking for an exercise routine to replace her beloved practice of running when she happened upon a woman hooping at a festival in Oregon.

"It was something I had never seen before," says Lucas, a former classroom teacher who also taught ballroom dance. "It was so beautiful, combining dance moves with the hoop."

It was also full-body, weight-bearing and low-impact, three physical attributes she was seeking to replace the pounding of running. Lucas began waist hooping, the more traditional version of the exercise, and soon moved into more complex moves incorporating other body parts, like arms and shoulders. Today, Lucas travels all over the world

teaching hooping. Most recently, she completed a video demonstrating "HoopChi," a method that combines the Chinese martial art tai chi with hooping.

"It's very addictive," the self-ascribed "hoop nerd" says. "It's exercise disguised as fun."

The exercise has grown significantly in popularity in a short time. Lucas says she has taught multiple generations of hoopers in a single class. The RCW session regularly attracts 10 to 15 people.

"I think it's successful because for many people while they are taking the class, the joy of youth comes back," Lucas explains. "Also, with so many people sitting at computers all day and obesity on the rise, people are looking for a creative outlet that gets them moving but is also inexpensive."

Lucas' advice for those looking for a new way to move their bodies while still having fun? "Give it a whirl!"

— Mary Lee Shalvoy

*Hoop dance lessons for all levels, 6:30–7:30 p.m. Mondays, Rhythmix Cultural Center, 2513 Blanding Ave., \$15 drop-in, \$10 pre-paid for four weeks; hoops are available for use or purchase; [www.lucashooping.com](http://www.lucashooping.com), [www.hulahooping.com](http://www.hulahooping.com).*

