

Memories made at Anderson Park's Daddy/Daughter Dance

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(Photo: Provided)

They arrive by limousines, party buses and the family car.

All are ready to dance the night away.

No, it's not prom or a wedding. This event is exclusively for daddies and their daughters and is hosted by the Anderson Township Park District.

The first Daddy/Daughter Dance was in 2001. From the beginning, it was clear that demand was high for such an event.

"The dance was planned to take place at the Anderson Senior Center, but we quickly realized as registrations started coming in that we would hit the senior center's capacity well before the dance date," Parks Recreation Manager Jessica Fall said. "We were able to secure Turpin High School's cafeteria and run a second location on the same night. Knowing how popular the dance was in 2001, we moved to the Starlight Ballroom in 2002 which could accommodate up to 600 people."

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The dance was so popular that it exceeded Starlight's capacity in 2003 and was expanded to include a dance on each Friday and Saturday night in 2004, she said. Both quickly sold out. When Starlight Ballroom went out of business in 2010, the dance was moved to Northern Kentucky University's Student Union Ballroom.

Jack Walsh lived in Batavia Township when he took his oldest daughter, Natalie, to their first daddy/daughter dance in 2003 or 2004.

After that first "date" the dance became a much anticipated tradition for the Walsh family. The family has since moved to Anderson Township and Natalie is now a freshman at Anderson High School. Because the dance is for girls ages 2-12, she has aged out. This year the tradition will come to an end as her sister, 12-year-old Olivia, enjoys her last dance.

Walsh remembers each dance fondly. The first year they attended it was held at the Starlight Ballroom, he said. He took Natalie to dinner at Frisch's where she prepared a special dish at the salad bar – a mixture of cottage cheese, cheddar cheese and the cheddar crackers.

"She called it a souffle," Walsh said. She still likes that, he said.

That year Natalie wanted to do everything but dance, he recalled. That's OK. For him, the dance was about that one-on-one time with his daughters. As an airline pilot, Walsh's work schedule can be unpredictable. The dance was that one special event that he would bid off in order to make it.

"It's a special night for everybody," Walsh said. "It doesn't have to follow any sort of script. It's just spending time with your kid that's important."

His daughters feel the same.

"They really made it about the father and daughter," Olivia said. Over the years, she enjoyed the photo option which provided her with photographic keepsakes of the night. She also enjoyed the slow songs.

"For the dads and daughters to dance together, it's really meaningful," she said.

Natalie said that she "absolutely" loved the dances.

"I really loved the venue and I loved how it was just a night with just your dad and maybe your sister," she said. "I really loved the food displayed and all the different people there to talk to. I also loved how amazingly decorated the venue was."

She misses the dances, Natalie said, but she's glad that Olivia is able to spend special time with their dad.

The focus of the Anderson Park District staff is to present a memorable evening for the fathers and daughters, Fall said.

"I think we are providing the perfect opportunity for dads to make lasting memories with their daughters," she said "We try to make the dance special for each couple and it becomes a treasured tradition."

About the dance

Space is limited for the dance and tickets are first-come, first-served. Dances, at the Northern Kentucky Student Union Ballroom, this year are:

No. 1: 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Friday, Feb. 12

No. 2: 2:30 to 4:30 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 13

No. 3: 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 13.

Tickets are \$30 for Anderson Township residents per couple (\$10 for each additional daughter) and \$40 for non-resident couple (also \$10 for each additional daughter).

For information call 513-388-4513 or visit the park district's website for additional information or to get tickets, www.andersonparks.com

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