

VRRDA Hall of Fame 2016
WENDY AND GREG GILBERT

In the early days, Greg and Wendy danced rock'n'roll as teenagers at the traditional Saturday night dances in Gippsland, in the local hall. Wendy's first rock'n'roll lessons were taught in Sale by a visiting teacher from Starr Ballroom, and then later, John and Heather Jarman began their Lakeside classes, making rock'n'roll so much more accessible.

Greg and Wendy began dancing together as a couple in 1997, married in 1998, and in the same year, started teaching under the name of S'Coolhouse Rock & Swing in country Victoria. And so they began teaching in Heyfield, a timber town in the foothills where 'men don't dance'. It proved quite a challenge to say the least! But the classes grew and they eventually started a second class in Maffra.

After training teachers to take over their classes, **they moved to Perth in 2001. They worked for 4 years in Perth, taught classes 4 nights a week, and performed in corporate groups.** They helped establish Summersun: a rock'n'roll festival held in Perth, and also travelled interstate to teach workshops at Wintersun, and in WA, Tas, NSW and Victoria.

Greg and Wendy were also instrumental in establishing the first Rock & Roll club in Launceston, Tasmania, called the Retro Rockers. They also developed a program for training dance teachers, which they put into place in Victoria, NSW, WA and Tasmania.

Did you know that Wendy was the first agent for Gorgeous, and sold shoes and merchandise for 15 years? In fact, I bought my first pair of Aris Allen swing shoes from Wendy several years ago.

They had several TV appearances in Perth including backing the weather on Channel 9 and promoting dancing on TV with appearances on Channel 21, and have been involved in many fund raising activities, including the Royal Perth Hospital appeal.

They have danced and entertained crowds at school fairs and community festivals, elderly citizens homes, hospitals, corporate functions, and have delivered many workshops to teachers and students alike. Wendy regularly teaches disabled adults, and has taught classes at the National Conference for the Disabled in Geelong.

Greg and Wendy started competing in the late 1990s, back in the days when you had to qualify for the Vic State Championships at one of the heats held around the state. This was a major logistical operation for them as they still had four of their six children at home and had to take the kids with them. It was so much easier when a heat was held in Sale. It was also easier when their daughter Grace, began to compete in the under 12 division from the age of 6. She and Zoe Hannon competed together for several years and were VRRDA Junior Champions every year of their competition.

Greg and Wendy competed successfully in Victoria and at Wintersun, and have trained other dancers for competitions in WA and Victoria, including junior divisions and teams. **They have both been regular guest judges at the Victorian State Championships over many years, and are a delight to watch when they hit the dance floor.**

Wendy has been a choreographer for local theatre and school productions, and was nominated for a choreography award for Grease by the Maffra Theatrical Company. She has also danced in many productions of Grease.

Between 2006-2009, Greg and Wendy lived and taught in Echuca, opening up their **Echuca branch of S’Coolhouse**, and then trained other teachers to take over their dance school when they returned to Gippsland in 2009. At this time, Greg and Wendy opened a dance studio in Maffra, which they ran for 3 years. To them it was a dream come true, and it enabled them to teach so many people to develop the love of dance, no matter what style. For those 3 years, their junior dancers were VRRDA champions.

Over a period of 17 years, they have enabled thousands of people to enjoy a love of dancing, and have encouraged people from so many walks of life to get up on the dance floor, and have fun!

Some of Greg and Wendy’s greatest achievements:

1. Establishing the Launceston Club.
2. Creating an opportunity for people to enjoy dancing who didn’t think they could...including those men in Heyfield!!
3. Community involvement
4. And the great friendships made through dancing...

Ladies and gentlemen, the VRRDA is honoured to induct Wendy Gilbert and Greg Gilbert into the 2016 Hall of Fame...

Annette Niven
VRRDA Secretary