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## West Covina center recreates prom for seniors

By Stacey Wang, Staff Writer  
Posted: 09/03/2009 11:52:52 AM PDT



April Mellem of West Covina crowns prom king Ralph Secours of Montebello and prom queen Barbara Pizzo of West Covina during the senior prom at the West Covina Senior Center on Saturday, Aug. 29. (Eric Reed / Correspondent)

In the 60 years they have known each other, Barbara Pizzo and Ralph Secours were not able to say they went to prom together until now.

As the pair glided across an empty dance floor to a live rendition of "What a Wonderful World," they moved in perfect sync. They had just been crowned king and queen at West Covina Senior Citizens Center's first senior prom on Aug. 29.

"It keeps you feeling so young and energetic. We love it," said Pizzo of West Covina, holding hands with her partner after their dance.

The 77-year-old Pizzo got together with Secours, 86, four years ago after the death of her husband. Since then, the couple have taken dance lessons together and attended several senior dances.

The two were voted by their peers as royalty after a dance-off against talented and rigorous competition.

"Our proms were not very big," recalled Secours of Montebello about his afternoon prom in 1942.

"I think it's nice to do an evening that lets someone relive their memories of yesteryear and to make new friends as well," said Travis Iseri, recreation supervisor at the center, prior to the festivities.

"We're able to recreate what would be positive and fun-filled memories, 60 years removed," he said.

The evening was a special reminder for Iseri of his day as a former prom prince at Cerritos High School.

"I'm not that old, so I remember my prom and I had a good time," Iseri said.

The senior prom was

a way for attendees to relive or create the high school experience decades later.

Seniors danced an array of styles - including tango and swing - to a live band.

For Mickey Washlow, the prom was a new experience because she did not attend her high school prom.

"I didn't know how to dance and I didn't have a boyfriend," she said.

The 91-year-old of La Verne, who learned to dance since then, beamed head to toe from the sparkle of her jewelry, dress and shoes. A now-lover of dance, Washlow spent her night demonstrating her skill.

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The event was an idea in the works for more than five months and was finally set into motion after receiving sponsorship from Inter Valley Health Plan, an organization that has worked with the community for more than 30 years.

"It was really exciting to know we were going to be able to bring the program forward," said Michele McNeill.

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The West Covina community service director was a former prom queen at her high school in Michigan.

"(The prom) epitomizes what we do every day. Our philosophy is to improve the quality of life for West Covina residents," said McNeill.



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