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Dance to the Brooklyn Park
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Dance to the Music With the Brooklyn Parkinson Group

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Five years ago my wife Judi was diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease. Since then it has been a long and winding road for both of us. One steady force in our lives has been the Brooklyn Parkinson Group.

BPG's mission is to enrich the lives of persons with PD and their families, by providing arts-based classes, exercise programs, informational talks, and support groups. According to its website and literature, "the activities sponsored by BPG engage mind, body and spirit and encourage persons with Parkinson's Disease to remain active within their community."

Judi is involved in weekly singing, dance, and movement classes held at the Mark Morris Dance Studio at Lafayette and Flatbush. Twice a week she participates in Fitness for Parkinson's classes at the Brooklyn campus of Long Island University. But even more important, she has developed a group of friends who share her struggle to resist the ravages of the illness.

Recently, the BPG dance program was featured in a *PBS NewsHour* broadcast. Reggie Butts, one of Judi's friends, explained the importance of the dance program to him. According to Reggie, "When the dance class is going on, there are no patients. There are dancers. It's liberated a part of me, created a sense of freedom, a sense of creativity." Joy Esterberg, another friend and group member, explained it slightly differently. Joy described dancing as "like bliss." While dancing "there is no constraint."

Dance classes, which started in 2001, are led by four professional dancers, two of whom are currently performing in the Mark Morris Dance Group's *The Hard Nut*, a version of the *Nutcracker*, at the Brooklyn Academy of Music.

