

# Zumbathon benefits Boys and Girls Club

By Amber Younger  
Staff Writer

“Are we going to have a good time?” repeated Paul Lewis, rallying the group of 40 who had gathered in the gym.

The crowd cheered, louder this time, bouncing to shake off the cold and gear up for a Saturday afternoon of Zumba. The first Salvation Army Boys and Girls Club Zumbathon was off to a start in the Boys and Girls Club Gym, located at 909 Liberty St. in Durham.

“It won’t be the last,” said Lewis, who organized the event. “We want to continue it.”

Lewis’ first interaction with the Salvation Army was in January 2014 after he got the organization’s phone number from a list of contacts from Durham Social Services.

“They called back within a couple days,” he said.

Grateful for the help he received during a time of personal need, Lewis immediately wanted to give back. It wasn’t until November, when he heard the bells of the Red Kettle Campaign ring, that he was moved to action.

“It just touched my heart,” said Lewis, placing a hand over his chest. “Now’s the right time to do it.”

Lewis has been a licensed Zumba instructor for years and has developed relationships in the Zumba community. This “Zumba love” motivated instructors like Maria Elena Williams, who teaches in Raleigh, to come out and lead a few routines.

“I love it,” Williams said with a grin, looking out on a room full of people having fun. “Regardless of race or color, Salvation Army is always helping.”

Lewis said he thinks Zumbathons held for a cause tend to draw a larger crowd. Between admission prices and donations, the Zumbathon on Feb. 21 raised \$440.

“That’s a start,” said Lewis, whose goal was \$1,000. “Next time these people are going to bring somebody.”

For more information about the Salvation Army of Durham, Orange and Person Counties, visit <http://www.salvation-armycarolinas.org/durham/home/>.



Dancers gathered for the first Salvation Army Boys and Girls Club Zumbathon in Durham to raise money for the club on Feb. 21. The dance event raised \$440. (Staff photo by Amber Younger)

## Benefitting the community

The fundraiser benefitted the Boys and Girls Club, said Tiffany Tyler, the Salvation Army public relations and outreach coordinator of Durham.

Tracey Bragg, a Salvation Army staff member, went to the Zumbathon to dance and support the club.

“It’s awesome that he wanted to put effort in,” she said of Lewis.

Bragg said she believes the Boys and Girls Club provides quality programs for children and is comparable to other more expensive afterschool programs.

A yearlong club membership only costs \$10, she said.

Bragg, also a club parent, said she is particularly thankful for the opportunities the club has given her 5-year-old son.

“He’s learned a lot,” she said of his participation in the reading program. He is now reading above grade level.

Lewis said he was pleased to see that the funds raised would be invested in the next generation.

## Giving back

Participants who were neon-clad and sporting jangling coin skirts grabbed hands and bowed their heads to thank

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— Paul Lewis,  
Zumba instructor

the God who made the event possible. Lewis, who is also a minister at Peace Missionary Baptist Church, said this was the most appropriate way to begin his Zumbathon.

“I felt led in my heart to do it,” he said. “Through the grace of God and prayer, my life changed.”

Lewis lost his job and his mother before he reached out to Salvation Army for assistance. He said that by the grace of God, he did not lose his house.

Lewis said his desire to give back to the community flowed naturally from his upbringing and he enjoyed getting the opportunity to shake hands with people in the community as he handed out fliers for his event.

“God gets you through things for others,” Lewis said. “It’s not for your own benefit. I thank God and give him the credit.”