

Resolana uses arts to change female inmates' lives



STAFF PHOTOS: CHRISTINA BARANY

Dianne Schayot teaches a dance to female inmates and other Resolana volunteers in the Dallas County Jail. Saturday's Westside Music Festival benefits Resolana.

Dancing to Redemptive Beat

BY DAVID CONARD
Staff Writer

A dozen women learning the salsa and later dancing to "Love Train" or "God is in the Roses" in a dance class sounds like fun.

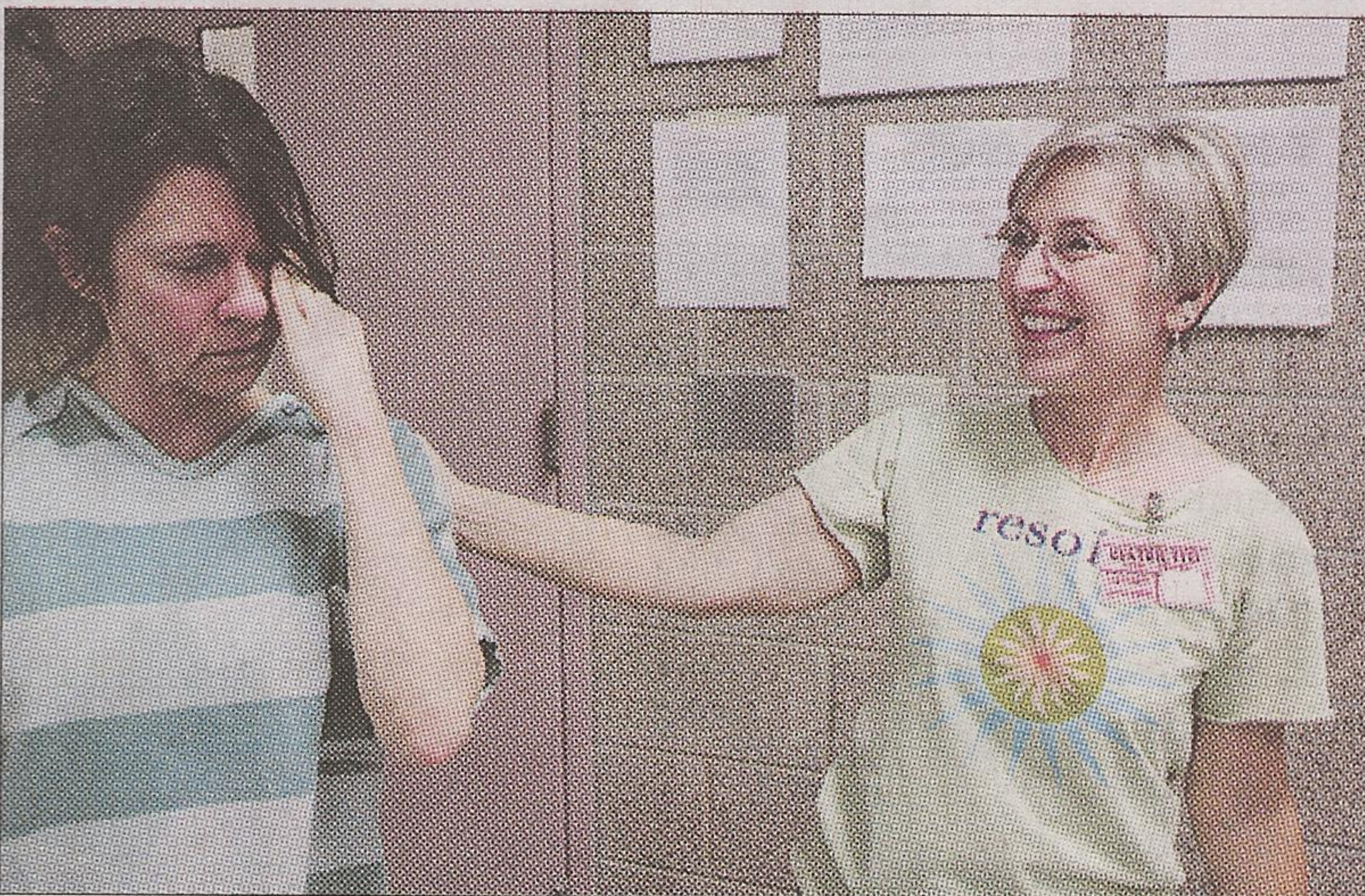
It means much more to these women, because they're dressed in county-issued green stripes and surrounded by double-sets of steel doors at the Dallas County Jail. It means enough that some inmates weep.

"I cry every class — this is an awesome program," said Sarah, 34, awaiting transfer to prison on a two-year drug charge sentence.

Last Friday's class was one of 10 held weekly held by the Dallas nonprofit Resolana, which offers courses to help inmates in art, dance, domestic violence counseling, anger management, substance abuse counseling, yoga, parenting, and more.

"We've had MBAs in there, we've had people who were sold for drugs at 9 years of age — really heartbreaking kinds of stories," said Fran Tynan, an Oak Cliff resident who chairs Saturday's Westside Music Festival benefiting Resolana.

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Resolana volunteer Pam Sparks reaches out to comfort an inmate named Tammy after she got emotional during the song "God is in the Roses."

Resolana

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Tynan, who characterized herself as a helper for the artists, said the dance and art allows the women to relax and find a creativity that many didn't know they had.

"We've [taught some] who have never had a crayon in their hand," Tynan said. "They've never had an art class. They've never had the opportunity to express themselves in anything else than words."

Many inmates have little to keep them busy, and sleep a lot to keep out of trouble, said Bette Buschow, Resolana's founder and director. Some inmates agree.

"My thing is about stimulation of the brain — without these classes, it's just dead time," said Tammy, 47, who's in jail for a DWI.

"You're not upset you're in jail, when you're in Resolana," Sarah said.

Buschow said inmates with disciplinary problems can't be in the program, which has a long waiting list.

"I don't want to say there aren't bad women who belong in jail, but the majority are non-violent offenders," Buschow said.

Buschow added most inmates have substance abuse problems or have experienced domestic violence.

Fifty-year-old Agnes said she asked to be returned to jail in July after being released from

a solicitation of prostitution sentence because she couldn't afford a drug treatment program and didn't think she would make it on the outside.

"I appreciate them," Agnes said of Resolana. "We need it."

Martha, 27, who has been waiting 14 weeks for a court date for an assault charge probation violation, said Resolana's classes help with her substance abuse problem.

News

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Inmates and volunteers dance arm in arm at the Dallas County Jail during a Resolana class.

WESTSIDE MUSIC FESTIVAL

What: Resolana benefit featuring music by Melinda Wood Allen, the Mark McKenzie Quartet, and Castiel

When: 2 to 6 p.m. Saturday

Where: 300 Singleton Blvd.

Tickets: \$10 per person, \$25 for families.

Call 214-233-6558 or e-mail resolanamusic@gmail.com.

"I've learned to forgive myself; I've learned a lot of ways of dealing with my emotions instead of drinking a lot," Martha said.

The organization's par-

said they get a lot out of volunteering.

"I'm very clear that I go there for me," Tynan said. "I know it's very nourishing for me. It's hard to not appreciate what you have after you've been in there for a session."

Several inmates said they want to volunteer with Resolana once they complete their probation, like Grapevine resident Mandy Roberts, who was released in November

after doing time for crack and meth possession.

"That's what keeps me out — going back in and teaching the girls," Roberts said.

Some inmates seem changed by Resolana.

"[I've learned] I'm a woman of worth, it's not too late, and it's OK if you have to start over again, and I'm not alone," Sarah said.

E-mail david.conard@peoplenewspapers.com

enting classes are important because statistics show children of inmates are six to eight times more likely to be involved in a crime, Buschow said.

Tynan and Buschow



A female inmate smiles as she does an Indian dance with other prisoners during a Resolana class.



Resolana founder and director Bette Buschow holds up the words to a song while Pam Sparks teaches hand motions to inmates and other volunteers.

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