



## **LINDA BESSENT**

Born in Queens, N.Y., Linda's love of dancing began at an early age during family gatherings, learning to dance from her father and other family members. Dancing was always a part of her young life and she regularly attended high school dances on the weekends. As a graduate student at UVA, she first experienced the “Shag,” observing students from North and South Carolina dancing at university parties. Although she wanted then to learn how to Shag, it was several years before the right opportunity presented itself.

Joining the Virginia Beach Shag Club (VBSC) in 2005, Linda enrolled in Larry Williams' and Steva Williams' beginner shag class. She fell in love with the dance, honing her skills and techniques at VBSC's weekly Mix and Mingle socials. In spite of a busy life, she managed to give back to the club by helping with fund raisers; assisting on various subcommittees; and helping new members learn the basics of the dance.

In 2007, Linda met her future husband and VSHOF member, Ron Bessent. At Virginia Beach's Beach Music Festival, they gave an impromptu shag demonstration to a group from Crewe, VA. This led to them giving shag lessons for people in the Southside VA area for 5 years, resulting in the formation of the Southside Shaggers Club. With the assistance of future VSHOF members Charles Harwood (with his wife, Mary), and Kendall and Stephanie Hockaday, hundreds of people from the area learned the basic and intermediate shag steps.

From the experience gained in Crewe, Linda became a regular instructor for the VBSC. In 2015, she and her husband established a beginner shag program at the Royal Courtyard and offered the instruction at no cost to anyone who wanted to learn. This became quite popular and soon expanded into an additional intermediate class. She continues teaching Shag at the VBSC and for the Kempsville Recreation Center in Virginia Beach.

Anyone who knows her or has been in one of her classes knows that she tries to keep things interesting, fun, and moving at an appropriate pace to effect maximum learning. In her own words, she offers “...Hopefully I can continue to give back to the dance and the club, and convey my love of this dance through teaching others!

It is my privilege to present to you Linda Bessent as the newest member of the 2024 Class for the Virginia Shaggers' Hall of Fame!