LOCAL NEWS

THANKSGIVING IN BOSTON

Beatrice Bell

Despite all the pain I've been subjected to for the last few weeks, I've been having so much fun. On November 3, somebody stole all my identification documents while I was selling papers outside Haymarket Station—where FoodBasket and the #111 bus are located.

You'd think this might lessen my thirst to sell papers, but it hasn't. On November 13, I had a mini seizure at Rosie's Place and an even bigger seizure on November 16. These annoyances would stop most people but not me.

On November 4, I paid for my storage space, and in the last couple of weeks, I've been to two parties to celebrate Thanksgiving.

On November 10, I went to the Celebration of Life party at the Hynes Convention Center with Michael, a vendor who sells papers in Harvard Square. Each year, I go to the event, which is put on by the Boston Living Center. The party celebrates the lives of those who have died from HIV/AIDS, those who are living with the disease and those who help people suffering with it.

This year, as in past years, Liz Walker was the MC for the night and a gentleman translated singing, it was time to eat and dance until 9 p.m. A remix of the "Cha Cha Slide" was played. The "Cupid Dance" was also played, too.

The second Thanksgiving party I went to was on November 19 at the Arthur Murray School of Dance. Sometimes us ladies outnumber the guys in class so we'll dance with each other instead. It gives us an understanding of both eggplant parmesan and a dessert made with Oreo cookies and covered with chocolate and mini-M&M's. I tried so much food, I got a bellyache.

I also had loads of fun dancing with Scott, Chris and two of the female teachers. I also danced with Simon, Rachel, an older gentleman student and a few other students who, like me, are either newbies or are slightly advanced. You should come join me for some fun at Arthur Murray School of Dance. This is my open invitation to you. Come Join Me Now.

Since my first lesson, I've lost a whole pant size. The exercise I get and the fun I'm having are improving my health immensely. I sleep better, eat less and my blood sugar level is more regular. I have a touch of hypertension, but the dancing is controlling that too. I've been doing what Mary J Blige said years ago: "Leave your situations at the door and get your ass up on the dancefloor!"

This works well for me. I forget about the mean person who stole my identification, my backpack and my bike bag. I forget about the stress I'm going through and the fact that I have to get back my and my six kids' birth certificates and social security cards and everything else that was stolen.

This year, I'm going to thank
parties to celebrate Thanksgiving.

On November 10, I went to the Celebration of Life party at the Hynes Convention Center with Michael, a vendor who sells papers in Harvard Square. Each year, I go to the event, which is put on by the Boston Living Center. The party celebrates the lives of those who have died from HIV/AIDS, those who are living with the disease and those who help people suffering with it.

This year, as in past years, Liz Walker was the MC for the night and a gentleman translated everything into Spanish. This year, we honored one of the original people who worked at and retired from the Boston Living Center. We also gave Larry Kessler the 2015 Peter Daniel Award for his exemplary commitment and loyalty to the entire HIV/AIDS community. The president and CEO of Victory Programs, Jonathan Scott, gave the award to Kessler.

After giving the award, they read the names of people who had recently died from HIV/AIDS or from complications related to the disease. After that, we were treated to the Boston Gay Men's Choir singing songs for us. There were 175 gay men in the choir singing beautiful music for us. They ended with their favorite Kelly Clarkson song, "My Heartbeat Song."

After they had finished singing, it was time to eat and dance until 9 p.m. A remix of the "Cha Cha Slide" was played. The "Cupid Dance" was also played, and people did the "Superman Dance" and the "Love Slide Dance" by R. Kelly. The R. Kelly song is called "Step In The Name of Love," but he gives directions on how to do the "Love Dance" in the song.

Toward the end of the night, people had fun dancing to Spanish music, even though many people couldn't understand the music because they couldn't speak Spanish. Dinner was a traditional meal of turkey, mashed potatoes, stuffing, cranberry sauce, salad, bread and butter, tea and coffee, juice and water, apple pie, sweet potato pie and pecan pie.

People won prizes in the raffle and were able to receive lots of information about HIV/AIDS. Samples and supplies, as well as candy, were given out before the party and as the party was ending, too.

The second Thanksgiving party I went to was on November 19 at the Arthur Murray School of Dance located at 20 Park Plaza. It was so much fun!

I started attending the Arthur Murray School of Dance after winning a free lesson. I wanted to expand my knowledge of ballroom dancing. I usually dance and sing to Sade's song "The Sweetest Taboo" when nobody is paying attention to me. It's a good song to salsa to, but that's half of my problem with ballroom dancing. I don't have the opportunity to dance with a partner all the time. I've been salsa-ing my life away by myself for years, but it's more fun to go to Arthur Murray School of Dance and dance with somebody.

I've been learning the Foxtrot, the Swing, the Hustle, (yup, I said the Hustle), the Cha Cha, the Tango, salsa, rumba and waltz with a partner who takes both the male and the female roles in class.

Sometimes, the ladies outnumber the guys in class so we'll dance with each other instead. It gives us an understanding of both roles—as the lead (the guy) and the follower (the gal).

At the Thanksgiving party, we practiced some dancing, but mainly, we enjoyed what was called the Las Vegas Potluck Dinner and Dance. People brought their favorite dishes to share with each other. I made two banana ice cream pies. It's very simple to make the pies. If you want the recipe, just drop an email to freeandunique@gmail.com or freebeat1965@gmail.com and I'll send you the recipe.

I particularly enjoyed having two different types of macaroni and cheese, turkey, mashed potatoes with gravy, fried potatoes, fried potato balls/puffs with cheese (homemade), pecan pie, banana ice cream pie, Dr. Pepper, macaroni salad, stuffing, some Chinese appetizers, have a touch of hypertension, but the dancing is controlling that too. I've been doing what Mary J. Blige said years ago: "Leave your situation at the door and get your ass up on the dancefloor!"

This works well for me. I forgot about the mean person who stole my identification, my backpack and my bike bag. I forgot about the stress I'm going through and the fact that I have to get back my and my six kids' birth certificates and social security cards and everything else that was stolen.

This year, I'm going to thank God that I'm alive for another year and that I have friends and family who care about me. I'm going to thank God that I can still keep helping people, which I enjoy doing every day of the year. I'm going to thank Him for letting me enjoy staying at the Harvard Square Homeless Shelter, Rosie's Place and Pine Street Inn until one of my places comes through in the next few weeks or months. Whichever it is, it doesn't matter. I'm going to keep smiling and have a beautiful Thanksgiving. I hope you enjoy your Thanksgiving too.

Beatrice Bell is a vendor and a writer for Spare Change News.