

Vail Daily

Dancing for a cause in Vail Valley

Celebrity dancers, and their dances

Argie Ligeros Tang: Salsa.

Rob Wright: Disco hustle.

Tricia Swenson: Cowboy cha cha.

Bill Stephenson: West Coast swing.

Rivers Jardis: Argentine tango.

Axel Wilhelmsen: Viennese waltz.

Doe Browning: Jitterbug.

Dr. Chip Woodland: Tango.

Linda Boyne: East Coast swing.

Sean Pack: "Gettin' jiggy with it."

Martha Brassel: Fox trot.

Susanna DeChant: "Gettin' jiggy with it."

Youth Foundation's Star Dancing Gala brings Vail Valley celebs onto the dance floor

Alexandra Navas

Vail, CO Colorado,

VAIL VALLEY, Colorado – Imagine the sizzle, romance and glamour of “Dancing with the Stars.” Now, add some local celebrities, Vail Valley professional dancers and a good cause, and you have the Youth Foundation's Star Dancing Gala.

Next Tuesday, 12 local stars, each paired with a professional dancer, will light up the Vail Valley Jet Center with their ballroom skills.

“It's going to be a very exciting evening. There are several dance teams that are all preparing diligently. I think it's just going to be a really fun event,” said Rob Wright, one of the local celebrities.

Wright will dance the disco hustle at the gala, sporting white bellbottoms a la John Travolta in “Saturday Night Fever.”

Not only does the performance promise to be fun and exciting, but it will also raise money for the Youth Foundation's after-school Literacy Program.

“(The Foundation) wants to help kids, and ballroom dancing is a hot thing going on right now. ... They're picking a subject that people are excited about,” said Maria Barry, a professional dancer who teaches jazz, tap and ballroom in the valley.

Barry will perform three dances for the gala.

The after-school programs are an important part of the foundation's mission to prepare kids with tools to succeed in the future. The Literacy Program teaches students reading and writing skills, and it also provides a safe, fun environment for children after class.

To keep the program affordable, the foundation relies on big fundraising events such as the gala, said Katie Santambrogio, the marketing and event director for the Youth Foundation.

“(The Literacy Program) is not a need that ends. There is always a need, and there will always be a need for fundraising.”

As the event draws nearer, excitement and nerves begin to mount. The dancers, many of whom have very little dancing experience, have been practicing now for more than two months.

“It's amazing. A lot of us are practicing on our own time. It's a lot of work, but the dedication of the dancers is above and beyond,” said Tricia Swenson, host and producer of TV-8's “Good Morning Vail” and another gala star. Swenson will dance the cowboy cha cha with her partner, Mark Pennington.

Bill Stephenson is an example of a dedicated dancer. He has been rehearsing his West Coast swing every week for the past eight weeks in preparation for the event.

“I'm nervous and excited. Nobody wants to make a fool out of themselves in front of 400 people,” Stephenson said.

But the evening goes beyond the ballroom. Not only will it support Vail Valley youth, the night provides an escape from routine. It's an opportunity to get out, have fun and kick back — all while helping a good cause.

If you go ...

What: Local celebrities ballroom dancing to support the Vail Youth Foundation's Literacy Program.

Where: A airplane hangar at the Vail Valley Jet Center.

When: 6 p.m. Tuesday.

Cost: \$200-\$250 depending on seating.

More info: Call 970-763-7000 or check out the Web site at www.stardancinggala.com.

<http://www.vaildaily.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20090816/AE/908169981&parentprofile=search&template=printart>