

Vail Daily

Linda Stamper Boyne: A life's lesson: Keep on dancing

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Life is not always sunshine and laughter, much as I wish it was. The tough times are what make us who we are. They keep us on our toes, challenge us as humans, help us appreciate the good. It's how we deal with challenges and what we do with the experiences that define us.

I was told recently that I should write about something dark and disturbing, that surely there was something else behind my smile and marshmallow fluff filling.

I laughed and said, “Nope. Pretty much fluffy through and through!”

I will admit, however, that this year has been a rough one for me, probably the hardest in LSB history. If I were to make a “Life's Pros and Cons List” for myself right now, the weight of the “Cons” would pull me right down into that dark, disturbing place. Fortunately, my fluffy center keeps me afloat.

Suffice it to say, 2009 is not going down in my record books as a stellar year, with one very notable exception: dancing in The Youth Foundation's Star Dancing Gala.

It started as a dream, more fantasy than reality, not being an actual dancer and all. But I put it out there, in print no less, and my fantasy took hold. And within this experience, the very unexpected happened to me.

Turning the fantasy into reality took months of practice to be able to take on the country two-step in front of hundreds of people at the fundraising event at the Vail Valley Jet Center. Two-stepping out my comfort zone was harder than I had imagined.

The day arrived and I no longer felt like an isolated person with a crazy desire to be on “Dancing With The Stars.” I felt like a part of something much bigger, working together with some extraordinary people, supporting The Youth Foundation and their dedication to help the kids in Eagle County. And who knew an airplane hanger could look so elegant?

When I took the stage, I wasn't nervous. With the lights low and a video package of me being interviewed about my boys' experiences in The First Tee program and clips of us practicing playing on two giant screens behind me, I was calmer than I had been in a long time.

Somehow, in the middle of that airplane hanger, surrounded by 700 people, I found inner peace. Huh. That's the last place I would have looked. I always knew it wasn't at a yoga studio.

The lights went up as the music started and when I heard the screams of encouragement from Team Boyne off to my left, a big smile appeared on my face that didn't leave until well into the next day.

In the midst of my magic boots and swirling red dress dancing their two step, while Carrie Underwood sang about not remembering her last name, I suddenly remembered the old me.

I found parts of me that life had buried under the dark rubble. I remembered I'm a lot stronger, more capable and much braver than I have seen myself as of late. And, damn, it felt good!

While I dance my way out of a tough year and the gala may be over, it's never too late to support The Youth Foundation. They are truly changing the lives of children in our community, giving them a chance, offering them opportunity, helping them create a different future for themselves than life would typically deal them. Go to theyouthfoundation.org to learn more and make a donation that will make a difference.

On a personal note, I want to thank some people who helped make my fantasy a reality, starting with my ever-patient and dedicated dance partner, Mark Pennington.

And Team Boyne, whose support and delight took me to another level and made the whole experience so much more fun! The ladies of Cos Bar for donating their time, talent and product to make up the lady dancers before we hit the stage (I'll never tell if I saw any of the men in their chairs ...).

Casey and her team from Salon and Day Spa for doing our 'dos. And Squash Blossom for loan jewelry that truly gave the dancers fabulous sparkle!

And finally, The Youth Foundation's staff, in particular Susan Milhoan and Katie Santambrogio, and all the volunteers who literally put thousands of hours into the event to make it a success.

Linda Stamper Boyne of Edwards writes weekly for the Vail Daily. She can be contacted through editor@vaildaily.com

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