

DANCING HAPPENINGS

4th Annual Dancing with the MOAB Stars

by Katlyn Keane

One of the reasons I look forward to Dancing with the MOAB Stars each year is because it is fun, plain and simple. This event is a special time when social workers are converted into backstage theater geeks and local citizens are twirling on a stage in front of 700 pairs of eyes. The evening is a unique blend of pure talent and uninhibited volunteerism. Dancing with the MOAB Stars pairs local dance instructors with well known Moabites who learn and perform a routine in about four months. Pairs can choose their own style of dance, music and costumes and the staff of the Moab Valley Multicultural Center tries to help in whatever way we can. This year's event will take place on Friday, Sept 15th at 7:00PM at the Grand County High School Auditorium. Tickets are now on sale at the Multicultural Center and Back of Beyond Books. All proceeds from ticket sales benefit the Multicultural Center and its critical programs and advocacy.

I know the staff looks forward to this event every year, but I want to assure you (perhaps if you are thinking of volunteering yourself in the future) that our participants have fun too! One of our MOAB Stars from 2015 said, "I just wanted to write to thank EVERYONE at Moab Valley Multicultural Center for such a fun event! I had a great time and really enjoyed participating in what has become my favorite event in town. You guys do a really good job!" Other dancers have expressed similar feelings and we hope that will never change. Though the event is a competition, having fun is the most important part. Many dancers have expressed gratitude at the opportunity to try something new and meet new people. This feedback is what makes us continue organizing this event year after year; we love bringing people together for a common goal. Once this event was established we identified the goal in two parts: 1) to bring different sectors of Moab life together in one



Kira Withrow and Mike McCurdy. Photo credit Logan Hansen

space and 2) to raise funds for the Multicultural Center. We are so glad that we can have fun doing both at the same time!

Workers and advocates and into the glittery world of show biz is a large leap, but somehow we've all found our niche. Wearing a different hat, literally and figuratively, is fun. Between costume changes, music cues, technical difficulties and more the staff of the Moab Valley Multicultural Center keeps smiling. The energy and enthusiasm of our audience and our participants is what makes this event so much fun for us. To step out of our roles as interpreters, social workers and advocates and into the glittery world of show biz is a large leap, but somehow we've all found our niche.

Joanna is always on the headset with our lighting and sound technicians, Leti and Rhiana are MC's, Zaida organizes the dancers, and I am usually convinced to be in some funny, short sketches throughout the program. We'll see where our new AmeriCorps VISTA, Haley, fits into the show this year!



Kathy Hazam and Ken Ballantyne. Photo credit Logan Hansen

The last factor in the equation, and the largest, is our audience. The very first year of Dancing with the MOAB Stars we did not know what to expect, however, I actually found myself laughing out loud after the audience's response to the first performance. It was an uproar of applause! One of our audience members from 2015 said "I just want to congratulate you (as well as I am sure does the whole city) on such a professional job! It was such an exciting community event, it made everyone smile!" I hope that everyone in our audience went home smiling, and based on the numbers on our sound meter, our audience sincerely enjoyed the event. I find myself surprised and humbled every year to see the amazing routines that our instructors have come up with, though

by now I should expect such professionalism and talent. Moab's got talent and that's a fact!

At the Multicultural Center we put our talents to use through five main program areas: Crisis Resource and Referral, Interpretation and Translation, Language and Life Skills, Youth Education and Outreach and Cultural Education and Outreach. As you can imagine, some of these programs require very serious problem solving involving immigration issues, domestic violence, resource navigation, language assistance, and more. Despite the serious nature of social work, the staff at the MVMC manages to have fun as well. Dancing with the MOAB Stars is one of the ways we do that. We LOVE to celebrate diversity and one of my favorite parts of the whole event is getting to meet and work closely with our volunteer dancers from all different circles of Moab. I have made relationships with people that I probably would have never met if it weren't for this fundraiser.

This event would not be possible without our fun-loving and generous supporters. We would like to thank our primary event sponsor, Colin Fryer, and his businesses: Red Cliffs Lodge, Red Stone Inn, Big Horn Lodge and Rustic Inn for supporting this year's show with an event sponsorship. There are many other supporters of this event and to see who has contributed thus far with either an in-kind donation please visit our website at www.moabmc.org. Muchas Gracias!



Norma Bañuelos and Mary McGann. Photo credit Logan Hansen



Flag Bearers. Photo credit Logan Hansen

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