

11th anniversary of Dancing with the Martin Stars raises more than \$200k

Jessica Levy

Martin County Healthy Start Coalition

STUART – If Len Goodman, one of the judges from the popular Dancing with the Stars television series, had attended Martin County Healthy Start Coalition's local Dancing with the Martin Stars event he surely would have given it a 10 out of 10!

Healthy Start, which offers support and education to pregnant women and infants, hosted their signature fundraising event in September at the Lyric Theatre.

The event was a resounding success, raising more than \$200,000. Thanks to the hard work of all the dancers and their supporters, these funds will go towards essential programs in Martin County that help ensure every baby is born healthy, every mother is supported, and every father is involved.

The format for the evening included a dynamic, local cast of nine Martin County "celebrities," each paired with a professional dance instructor. These brave, novice dancers not only put their best foot forward to shine on the dance floor, but were also tasked with raising funds from friends, neighbors and business colleagues through sponsorships, ticket sales and contributions. The goal was to win enough votes from a judges' panel to claim bragging rights of Dancing with the Martin Stars Champion.

Each team chose their music and dance styles, including combinations of Swing, Rumba, Paso Doble, Salsa, Cha Cha, Bolero, Argentine Tango, Desert Dance, and Musical Theater Jazz.

The show was a sellout. Attendees filled more than 500 seats in the Lyric, 50 viewers livestreamed the event, and a private showing at Hudson's on the River, a restaurant in Downtown Stuart, also reached full capacity.

Guests were treated to an energized evening of entertainment that opened with a high-powered dance routine by Marianella Tobar's Latin Addiction For-



Top fundraising team Donna DeMarchi and Bob Murray. PROVIDED BY MARTIN COUNTY HEALTHY START COALITION

mation Dance Team, followed by a video vignette of each team and the star dancers.

Mike Gonzalez, a 2018 Star Alumni, emceed the evening with his usual enthusiasm, style and humor for the second year in a row, and fourth year involved in the event.

Samantha Suffich, chief executive officer of Martin County Healthy Start Coalition, and Steve Swindler, board president, welcomed the audience and shared the mission and programs of the nonprofit.

Meanwhile, behind the scenes, Aubrey Campbell, Martin County Healthy

Start's director of operations, worked with Toni Ryll of Team Holland and Jennifer Yormak of Starstruck to produce a seamless event from start to finish.

After intermission, and before the winners were announced, world-class professional dancers Andrea & Dmitriy Kuzmenko wowed the audience by dancing a smooth cha-cha.

There were several award winners in a variety of categories:

- First Runner-Up Dance Team: Jessica Alvarez and Michael Chaves, with a score of 29.

- First Runner-Up Fundraising Team: Rio Ratermanis and Marianella

Tobar, raising \$27,234.

- Top Dancing Team: Natalie Desmangles and Brian Spector, with a perfect score of 30.

- Top Fundraising Team: Donna DeMarchi and Bob Murray, raising \$38,131.
- Overall Champion Team: Natalie Desmangles and Brian Spector.

"There was a tremendous amount of energy in the theater, and it was clear the audience was having a great time watching their favorite local stars dancing their hearts out for a great cause," said Suffich. "Thanks to everyone's contributions, we

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Overall winners Natalie Desmangles and Brian Spector. PHOTOS PROVIDED BY MARTIN COUNTY HEALTHY START COALITION



Top dancing team Natalie Desmangles and Brian Spector.

Dancing

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will better be able to fund and service Martin County families with the impor-

tant programs our coalition offers.”

Participating dancers:

- Kasia D’Auria, Realtor with Re/Max of Stuart, paired with Jang Don
- Donna DeMarchi, Esq., Personal Injury Attorney with the Eberst Law Firm, paired with Bob Murray

- Jane Hallick, President of Jane’s Dane Boutique, paired with Craig Galvin
- Jessica Alvarez, founder of Velo Med Spa, paired with Michael Chaves
- Natalie Desmangles, Assistant Branch Manager with SouthState Bank, paired with Brian Spector
- Rio Ratermanis, Clinical Educator

with HCA Center for Clinical Advancement St. Lucie Hospital, paired with Marianella Tobar

- Dr. Noor Yono, Premier Neurology, paired with Leah Landau

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Members of the Healthy Start staff from left: Healthy Start Manager of Strategic Impact, Angela Aulisio; Community Engagement Manager, Jill Taylor; CEO, Samantha Suffich; Clinical Provider Liaison, Anastasia Anderson; Director of Operations, Aubrey Campbell; and Board President, Steve Swindler.



Samantha and Knight Suffich with Past Star and 2022 Sponsor, David and Kate Bradford of Edward Jones.

Dancing

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- Tyler Raynes, SLC Commercial Real Estate, paired with Daisy Krakowiak-Wiebe
- Dr. Rabih Kashouty, Neurostrive, paired with Tanya Chaves
- Judges:
 - Dr. Brian Moriarty, owner and president of Loving Chiropractic of Stuart
 - Charles Jones, lead singer of the Jazz R & B Unit, The Charles Jones Trio and owner of CDJ Entertainment
 - Andrea Kuzmen, owner and professional ballroom instructor at In Motion Ballroom

- Sponsors:
- \$10,000.00: The Eberst Law Firm - Car Accident Attorneys
 - \$7,500.00: Hudson's on the River
 - \$5,000.00: Casco Tools, Inc.
 - \$5,000.00: Chris & Donna Follmer
 - \$2,625.00: Ashley Capital
 - \$2,550.00: SouthState Bank
 - \$2,500.00: Loving Chiropractic of Stuart, Inc.
 - \$2,500.00: Neurostrive Hydration and Med Spa



The cast from left: Leah Landau, Noor Yono, Tanya Chaves, Rabih Kashouty, Jane Hallick, Craig Galvin, Marianella Tobar, Rio Ratermanis, Micheal Chaves, Jessica Alvarez, Natalie Desmangles, Brian Spector, Donna DeMarchi, Bob Murray, Kasia D'Auria, Jang Don, Daisy Krakowiak, Tyler Raynes. PHOTOS PROVIDED BY MARTIN COUNTY HEALTHY START COALITION

and Med Spa

- \$2,500.00: Premier Neurology and Wellness Center
- \$2,500.00: The Gordana Uscumlic Foundation

Martin County Healthy Start is a

nonprofit organization dedicated to ensuring that every baby is born healthy. It provides educational and health services to pregnant women, new mothers and their families at no cost, particularly expectant mothers who are at risk for

late or no prenatal care. For more information about Martin County Healthy Start Coalition and its ongoing programs, visit mhealthystart.org, call 772-463-2888 or follow the organization on Facebook.