

Dancing for a Cause

Earlier this year, the Greenfield Rotary Club of IN came up with an idea: to organize an annual dance contest and fundraiser that would benefit the Hope House, a shelter for homeless families and individuals of Hancock, Rush and Shelby Counties of IN. The shelter provides short-term housing and essential life-skills training to individuals and families in need. Each year, the Hope House provides over 4,300 nights of shelter. The Hope House also provides each adult resident with individual guidance; and offers classes for a variety of life skills including budgeting. The shelter relies on the generosity of community and its citizens to provide basic necessities and care for its shelter residents.

The inaugural dance fundraiser took place on June 7th 2014 at the Greenfield-Central High School Auditorium.



The Greenfield Rotary Club had an outstanding group of volunteers who ensured that the event ran smoothly. They secured facility with a suitable dance floor for the event; came up with beautiful graphic designs for posters and tickets; organized concession stand; provided event security; manned ticket desk; worked as ushers and so on. The organizers recruited amazing DJ and MC volunteers. A number of local businesses promoted sales of spectator tickets. The event was also promoted through the local newspaper and radio station.

The Greenfield Rotary Club even secured a corporate sponsor, NineStar Connect, for the event as well as several “Friend of the Program” sponsors and was able to offer cash prizes for 5 best dance routines. The Rotary Club also secured toy donations from Novelty Inc, a product development company headquartered in Greenfield, IN.

But...

The event organizers needed dancers... And the judges...

And that is where the Heartland Chapter of USA dance came in. By utilizing its ties with the local dance studios and clubs, the Chapter recruited a panel of 4 judges (all volunteers) and put together a 3-hour program. There were a total of 47 contestants from 10 dance studios and clubs who presented 27 gorgeous routines. The routines were intermixed with the general dancing. The Rotary Club established parameters of the competition keeping in mind that the ultimate goal was to raise money for charity. The event was open to performers of all ages and all levels of proficiency (pro, pro-am and am dancers), and encompassed variety of dance styles (ballet, ballroom, Latin, modern, etc). Routines ranged from solo dancers, to couples and formations.

The Heartland Chapter helped develop the judging criteria. Given the variety of dance types and skill levels, a unified set of criteria was impossible to implement. Instead, a more general approach was used. Since this was NOT an official dance competition, we did not expect the competitors to be judged on proper footwork. Instead, we wanted our contestants to have a good

time! The routines were evaluated by the judges with the following elements in mind: correct timing; good technique; musicality; performance skills and expression; ability to "draw-in" audience; choreography; and costuming (i.e., ensuring that costumes fit with the dance and song being used).

Despite the challenges presented by the contest's format and the large number of contestants, judges were very efficient in their deliberations. It was tough to decide on a winner across multiple genres presented, but the final outcome of judging deliberations was well balanced across the different dance categories.



This year's winners were:

1st place: Scott and Yulia Shook of Starlite Ballroom (Viennese Waltz);

2nd place: Rog and Amy Greenawalt of Starlite Ballroom (Bolero);

3rd place: Olga Cansino of Dance Factor with her partner Chad Wright (Salsa).

The 4th and 5th place were awarded to dancers from the IN Ballet Conservatory.

Regardless of their actual placement in the contest, all dance contestants under the age of 18 also received large toy monkeys donated by the Novelty Inc.



Besides helping organize the event, the Heartland Chapter made a cash donation to the fundraiser becoming one of its “Friends of the Program” sponsors. The Chapter was also involved in promoting the event and selling the spectator tickets.

The contest was attended by the Mayor of Greenfield who gave opening and closing remarks. The proceeds from the fundraiser were presented to the Hope House.

The event organizers are hoping to generate more money next year by promoting the event earlier and more broadly. The organizers are also looking at a different location that might be more attractive to a larger number of spectators. The cooperation between the Greenfield Rotary Club and the Heartland Chapter continues...

You can view the pictures from this and other Heartland events at <http://www.indyusadance.org/photos/>

PS: as busy as the Heartland Chapter was with the preparations for the Dancing for Hope Fundraiser, the Heartland dancers managed to squeeze in two more public exhibitions in the month of June. One of them was for the Elderberries, a fellowship group at St Luke’s United Methodist Church.



Another was for Marquette Manor retirement center, whose residents invite Heartland to their annual Firefly Ball. After the exhibitions, the Heartland members stayed for the general dancing and danced with the Marquette Manor residents to the beautiful tunes of the Indianapolis Jazz Orchestra that was providing live music for the Ball.

Marquette Manor, June 2014