

FEATURE

Tri-Valley Stars to Dance to Raise Funds for LVPAC

by Carol Graham



Faith Alpher, Bob Carling and Juliette Goodrich will compete in Tri-Valley Dancing with the Stars.



David Lewis, Karla Brown and Mony Nop round out the cast of Tri-Valley Dancing with the Stars.

An ill-fated attempt to breakdance at his high-school reunion isn't keeping Dave Lewis from seeking his inner Patrick Swayze.

"I jumped at the opportunity to be the sixth and final contestant," declares the NBC News Radio sports anchor. "All six of us have been competitive in our respective positions: politicians compete for votes, comedians compete for laughs, businesspeople compete for the market, and broadcasters compete for audiences. While this event is fun, I'm certain the

competitor in each of us will come to the surface."

Which is just the way audiences like it. The first-ever "Dancing with the Tri-Valley Stars" takes place on Saturday, May 12, at 8 p.m. All are invited to cheer on – and vote for – the dancers at the Bankhead Theater in Livermore during this gala fundraiser.

"This event is the perfect balance between fun and a true competition," Lewis adds. "The experience represents living a more adventurous life — to try new things and take a chance. Let's dance!"

Dancing with the Tri-Valley Stars offers all the glamor, moves and music of the popular TV show upon which it is modeled. Dancing with the Stars began in 2005 and was recently renewed for its 28th season. Mirrorball Trophy? Check. Sparkly gowns? Check. Spray tans? Maybe.

"We thought this would be a great way to engage the community," says Scott Kenison, executive director of Livermore Valley Performing Arts Center (LVPAC). "We've looked for opportunities to put local talent and familiar faces on the

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Faith Alpher:
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Bob Carling:
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Karla Brown:
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Dave Lewis:
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Juliette Goodrich:
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Mony Nop:
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Bankhead stage, and this is another step in that direction. I'm looking forward to seeing all the contestants shine."

The weekend prior to the performance, the Utah Ballroom Dance Company professionals will roll into town to begin working with the locals.

"On Sunday, the stars will meet their professional partners and find out which dance they'll be learning," Kenison says. "Over the course of the week they'll learn a 90-second dance, rehearse for the competition, and be fitted for costumes. On the evening of the show, they'll perform their dances in front of the audience and a small panel of judges. While the winner is being determined, Utah Ballroom Dance will perform a dance showcase. At the conclusion of the evening, the winner will be awarded the Mirrorball Trophy."

A video highlight reel with commentary will also entertain the audience.

"The stars of the Tri-Valley are folks who work to make this a better place to live and work," Kenison says. "We can already tell from their enthusiasm that we've chosen fun, friendly competitors. We think they'll have a great time preparing for the show, and we'll have a great time watching them."

The stars are Lewis, Mony Nop, Faith Alpher, Juliette Goodrich, Karla Brown, and Bob Carling.

"What's interesting to me is not just that they're all local luminaries, but they have similar backgrounds, so in a sense they compete in other arenas, as well," says Roberta Emerson, marketing manager for LVPAC. "Two are in real estate (Brown and Nop), two have coached middle school basketball (Nop and Lewis), three are media personalities (Lewis, Alpher and Goodrich), two are children's book authors (Goodrich and Nop), and two are city council members (Carling and Brown)."

They also share a lack of ballroom-dancing experience, although their approaches to learning vary widely.

Juliette Goodrich, a KPIX anchor, says, "I have never had dance experience, so this should be fun and challenging, to say the least. Before agreeing, I asked my kids and all three said, 'Mom, you have to go for it.' I'm in the news business and we are naturally competitive to get a story or interview. We thrive on that. As for the dance competition, I'm looking forward to the whole process of learning a dance under a deadline, performing it, and seeing how I do. I have no idea if I have dance skills. (Oh wait, my kids say I don't!) But I don't plan to have secret training like Davis Lewis. Game on!"

With a lifetime devoted to sports, Lewis admits to being competitive, adding, "Especially with some of the unnamed contestants talking all-in-fun trash to 'bring it on.'"

Lewis is learning ballroom fundamentals at Arthur Murray in Livermore, and has taken to watching videos on YouTube instead of ESPN.

Mony Nop, a survivor of Cambodia's Killing Fields, served a Livermore police officer for 17 years before becoming a realtor, motivational speaker, nonprofit founder, and author.

"I thought it would be fun to do something way out of my comfort zone," Nop says. "I took lessons from Arthur Murray over two years ago, and enjoyed it tremendously, but discovered that I have two left feet. (Can you say nervous?) The audience will be thoroughly entertained, and their hearts will be filled with joy knowing they are supporting a great cause."

Proceeds from the event will fund the Bankhead's student-discount program.

"Making the arts accessible for all ages is a key tenet of our mission," Emerson says. "Discounted tickets, free concerts and events, in-school arts opportunities, and scholarships for art and music camps, help support this effort. The six dancers are all local leaders known for their support for young people and the arts in our community, so this is a perfect combination."

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Bob Carling, Livermore City Councilmember and former Sandia Laboratories director, says, "I hope the

audience is entertained, has an enjoyable evening, and will return for other performances at the Bankhead."

Faith Alpher, a popular radio personality on KKIQ, performs comedy, stars in her hit one-woman shows: Through the Eyes of Faith, and Black Girl, Funny World.

"I'm so excited to get the opportunity to do something way out of my comfort zone," Alpher says. "I've always been confident, but now I'm learning to be courageous. Whether on or off stage, or in my Arbonne business, I'm learning that without courage you cannot succeed."

Utah Ballroom Dance Company is the U.S. National Formation Champion in both Standard and Latin ballroom dancing. They've received accolades for their "Ballroom Fever" tour, which

includes more than 100 international performances each year.

"I'd like to thank LVPAC and the Bankhead for coming up with the idea of putting locally-known names into a venue that is both fun and entertaining," says Karla Brown, a Pleasanton City Council member and realtor. "I'm pleased to join in the fun, but have never been trained as a dancer, so this is all new. Recently, I've dropped into a few dance classes around the Tri-Valley to get some idea of the different types of ballroom dances. I've learned there are a lot of technical steps and maneuvers to master. I want to do well as a representative of the City of Pleasanton."

General admission tickets are \$30-\$60, and student and military tickets are \$17. The Bankhead Theater is located at 2400 First Street.

"This is an opportunity to see ballroom dancing on a professional level with local talent and all the bells and whistles of a ballroom competition,"

Kenison says. "We'll be posting on social media about the week's activities leading up to the event, so people can get in on the excitement and see how the event is taking shape. We're hoping people from across the Tri-Valley and beyond will come out to enjoy a fun evening and support our stars. There are no losers; everyone who puts on their dancing shoes is a winner."

Lewis, fortunately, has had plenty of time to recover from his breakdancing performance.

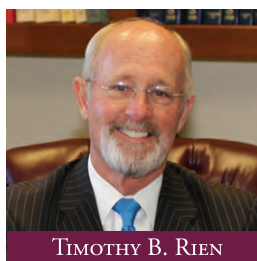
"It resulted in one hour of high fives, and one week of chiropractic treatment," he says. "For Dancing with the Tri-Valley Stars, there will be only one winner but all six of us will be bold enough to put ourselves out there with some guaranteed mistakes. We'll overcome the stumbles, smile, and keep going. Win or lose, the sparkle and sequins will make everyone look great."

To learn more, visit lvpac.org, or call 925.373.6800.

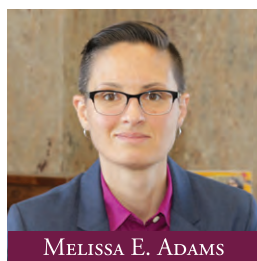


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