

EAST OREGONIAN

LIFESTYLES

WEEKEND, JANUARY 10-11, 2015

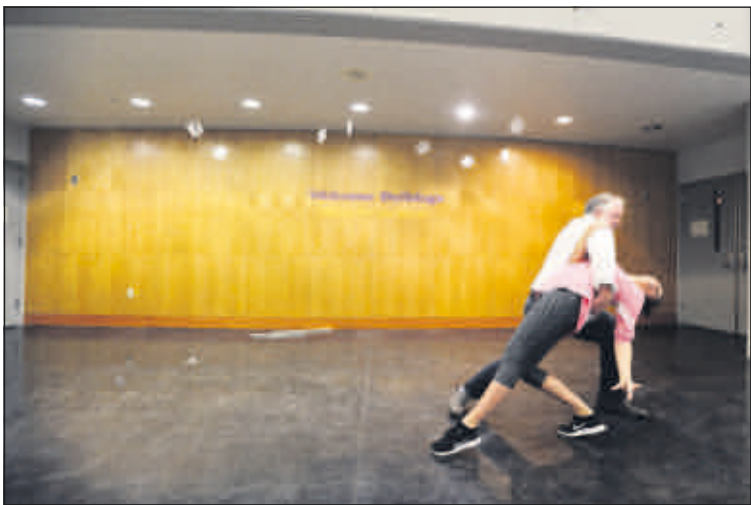
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Kristi Smalley of Hermiston practices the waltz with dance instructor Seth Ward of Keizer while preparing for the Dancing with the Hermiston Stars competition Tuesday in Hermiston.

ARE YOU READY TO RUMBA?

or foxtrot, or waltz, or Charleston, or swing ...



Hermiston stars take the stage for charity

By TAMMY MALGESINI
East Oregonian

When six familiar faces take the stage for Dancing With Hermiston Stars, don't let the glitter and glam fool you. Members of the group have thrown down the gauntlet and are ready to rumba as they compete in raising money for the charities of their choice.

In its third year, the popular Desert Arts Council event pairs local stars with members of the Utah Ballroom Dance Company. The partners met earlier this week and have been learning their moves. The event crescendos with Saturday's community performance in the Hermiston High School auditorium.

An evening of show tunes will showcase the talents of Dave Smith, who will be swing dancing to "Jailhouse Rock," Dawn Kennison-Kerrigan doing the Charleston to "Chicago," Eric Reise taking on the pasodoble to the tunes of "Pirates of the Caribbean," Erica Sandoval getting down with the mambo in "Dirty Dancing,"



John Wambeke of Hermiston practices the foxtrot with dance instructor Laura Hanlon of Newport Beach, Calif., as other teams rehearse Tuesday for the Dancing with the Hermiston Stars competition in Hermiston.

Kristi Smalley waltzing as "Cinderella" and John Wambeke doing the foxtrot with the "Pink Panther." Side-stepping the opportunity to participate the past two years, Smith decided to embrace the spirit of the event. Now, the hometown boy is having fun

and raising money for Campus Life. And because of his lack of dancing skills — Smith admits "wiggling a little" when at weddings — he is leaning heavy on the fun factor. "Behind the scenes, there's been ribbing and trash talking, so it's been really fun," Smith said.

But the king of trash talk, according to Kennison-Kerrigan, has been Smith himself. "Dave thinks he's going to win the whole thing. He did just have toe surgery, so that will put him at a disadvantage — especially if I step on him with high heels," Kennison-Kerrigan said.

Speaking of shoes, Reise may have stepped on Sandoval's toes when he observed her wearing her sturdy work boots during the first rehearsal.

"She could use orthopedic flats, she might hurt herself with the taller heels," he said.

Sandoval, Hermiston's crime prevention officer, was quick with a comeback, saying they

might need paramedics on standby with oxygen for Reise. Sandoval said he took off his tie and peeled some layers as things heated up on the dance floor.

Sizing up the competition, Smith initially deduced Wambeke trots ahead of most everyone on the dance floor. Wambeke, who heads up the annual Cabin Fever Concert, admits his talents are more focused on singing and playing instruments. Also, it appears Smith didn't investigate Sandoval's past experiences.

While Sandoval and Reise have argued that only one "E" would be left standing, Wambeke said it's conceivable it could go to either Sandoval or Reise.

"Erica is a really good dancer," Wambeke said. "And I think Eric has really good rhythm."

By participating in the event, Sandoval is checking off an item on her bucket list. Although she's never had real formal training, she did participate on

Eric Reise of Hermiston dips dance instructor Chandler Moss of Las Vegas, Nev., while practicing the pasodoble Tuesday for the Dancing with the Hermiston Stars competition on Tuesday in Hermiston.

If you go

WHEN: Saturday, Jan 10
TIME: 7 p.m., doors open at 6:30 p.m.
PLACE: Hermiston High School auditorium
COST: \$35 adults, \$20 students

Hermiston's Stardust dance team and was a part of a hip hop group.

"I've been dancing since I learned to walk," she said.

Reise also said you can't count Smalley out — she could waltz in under the wire.

For Smalley, a key motivation is raising money for The Arc Umatilla County. Also, she got caught up in the excitement of the event as an audience member during the past two seasons. She later had an encounter with Jacelyn Keys, event chairwoman for Desert Arts.

"In a moment of weakness or inspiration, I said, 'Do you need dancers?' It sounded good in July," Smalley said with a laugh.

In addition to her experience behind the scenes and on stage, Kennison-Kerrigan, a teacher at Desert View Elementary School, is excited the professional dancers have been working with some area students. A group of 40 will dance during the show's opening number.

Kennison-Kerrigan is in awe of the whole process. While the competition winner is determined through the judges' voting, the audience also votes through donations, which go to the dancer's charity.

"It's amazing how people can learn to dance that fast," Kennison-Kerrigan said. "I think it's great they ... put on a great show and all the charities benefit from it."



Dance instructor Naomi Skee of Santa Maria, Calif., demonstrates hand stylings to Dawn Kennison-Kerrigan of Hermiston on Tuesday in Hermiston.