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Community leaders get out of their comfort zones in DWTS

By Brock Weir

His competitors thought he might have a bit of an edge ? after all, his fancy footwork has served him well throughout his professional career.

They've carried him to international acclaim, representing Canada and England, picking up numerous trophies along the way.

But, to his dismay, Jimmy Brennan has recently discovered that there are few transferrable skills from the soccer pitch to dancing glory.

Few? ?None!? he contends.

Nevertheless, Mr. Brennan, president of the Aurora Youth Soccer Club, is one of eight community leaders who are being put through their paces by the professional dancers of Artistica Ballroom Dance studios ahead of the third annual Dancing With the Easter Seals Stars Newmarket/Aurora, an evening of fun and entertainment which raises tens of thousands of dollars each year to send physically challenged kids to summer camp.

Joining him on the floor in the friendly dancefloor face off will be snap'd Aurora's Melanie Bell, Brian Johns of Vince's Market, fraktals founder Ingrid Kulbach, Treefrog's Sarid Layton, community builder Stu McLaren, financial advisor Kevin Murdoch, and realtor Susie Strom.

Since signing on, each of the eight have been hard at work not only learning completely new and unfamiliar dance steps, but taking to social media to build awareness, raise funds and sell tickets for the event itself.

All of it hard work, sure, but it's for a good cause with a big splash of fun.

?It's a great community fundraiser for the kids who are going to be able to do things they wouldn't otherwise be able to do,? says Strom, whose daughter Lindsay danced in the competition last year. ?She is the newer, improved version so the expectations shouldn't be high! She just said to have a couple of drinks and to have fun.?

Fun is the name of the game for Kulbach, who has been building awareness of the events through videos on social media channels on her hunt for appropriate dancing shoes.

?I enjoy dancing and it is such an incredibly fun evening for everyone and we are creating fun for those kids at camp,? she says. ?I haven't fundraised before, so this is all new territory for me.?

While Kulbach is showing a range of wildly inappropriate footwear in her videos, Murdoch is making a star out of his dog. So far, he and his canine have been recorded showing off tricks and luxuriating with a couple of drinks in the hot tub, but his dancing is under wraps.

?I've been a fundraiser since Day One, so if you want to see me dance, you're going to have to pay for it!? he jokes.

(And, full disclosure, The Auroran did see some of his moves at Thursday's group rehearsal and it might be worth the money!)

?It's for the kids. Bottom line. People need to dig in their pockets. It's a great charity.?

Adds Strom; ?We're okay looking like goofs to support the kids. This has been a lot more challenging than any of us thought, trying to remember everything. You think you're somewhat coordinated, but you're not! We are hoping [instructors Patrick Derry, Kelly Stacey and Anastasia Trutneva] make us look good.?

?They will, for sure!? says Kevin.

From the perspective of Brennan, being a part of this event is something he has wanted to do since seeing friends hit the floor in last year's competition.

?It is one of those things where you say, yeah, sure, and then the emails start coming and you realise you really have to do this now!? he says. ?But you're with good people and you're supporting the community, as well. We're willing to get out of our comfort zone and do whatever it takes to help, and we just hope the community will do the same.?

For more information on all eight of this year's Dancing With The Stars contestants, visit www.easterseals.org/dancing-with-easter-seals-stars-newmarket-aurora. There, you can purchase individual tickets for the October 5 event ($150 per person or $1,100 for a table of eight) as well as vote for your favourite dancer.

Tickets may also be purchased by calling 705-797-2675 or emailing cmyke@easterseals.org.

This year's event will be held at the Venetian Banquet & Hospitality Centre in Concord.