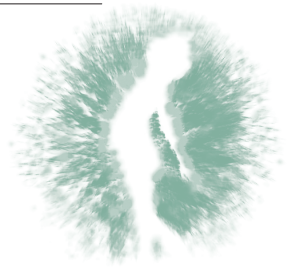




Dance for a Cure

a Mo-dazz for the Arts production benefiting
Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center and the Pete Gross House



THE CURE IS IN THE DANCE

By Chantelle Lusebrink
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Several local dancers rocked the stage at the Eastlake High School Theatre last Saturday in Dance for a Cure, a benefit performance raising more than \$26,000 for the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center and the Pete Gross House.

The dancers from Mo-dazz for the Arts, a nonprofit dance company located in Bellevue, performed for nearly three hours for an audience of 500, portraying the emotional journey of Tricia Grove, a 36 year-old Maple Valley resident, defying medical odds against her cancer diagnosis in 2002.

Dancing in the benefit were Issaquah and Sammamish girls Lauren Bongiani, 11, Mica Moody, 10, Audrey Menz, 8, Jessica Pelluer, 9, Michelle Aanenson, 14, Rachel Boswell, 16, and Ashley Hutchinson, 17.

"I like knowing that I was dancing for people with cancer," said Bongiani, who attends Beaver Lake Middle School.

"It touches everyone here," said Issaquah dancer/choreographer Sean Nyberg. "My grandpa, who grew up in Issaquah, Ernie Nyberg, died in April two years ago from cancer. This is extremely personal for me and for most people here."

In its second year, Dance for a Cure utilized various forms of dance including hip-hop, jazz, modern and interpretive, to portray the successes and struggles of cancer patients and survivors, sending audiences on an emotional roller coaster from love and hope to helplessness and fear. Cancer survivors Jerry and Jo Stubbs attended and said they were thoroughly pleased with the show.

"My granddaughter is dancing," Jo Stubbs said.

"But it is a cancer benefit, and we are both survivors. I had uterine sarcoma, and it has been in remission for nine years."

Young dancers performed intricate choreography to a variety of music, including rap, country and popular renditions of "Over the Rainbow" and "Freeze Frame," keeping audience members on the edge of their seats.

"She came to me and she wanted to help me, but I wasn't accepting anyone's help," Grove said of her sister's efforts to launch Dance for a Cure. "So I told her to go make a difference to make me better."

Diagnosed in 2002 with late stage uterine sarcoma, a cancer originating in the cells of connective tissues, muscle, fat or bone surrounding the womb, the then 33-year-old former University of Washington cheerleader was given a 1 percent chance of survival.

After aggressive therapy, her cancer went into

remission until 2004, when it returned in the form of six inoperable metastatic tumors located in her occipital lobe.

After consulting with a medical team from the East Coast, Grove ultimately underwent an experimental treatment, during which she lost sight in one eye and became color blind.

Despite those losses, however, Grove's treatment was successful and her cancer, to date, is in remission.

Taking what her sister wished to heart, Elizabeth Lanning tirelessly facilitated sponsors and choreographed the event with her young dancers, debuting in spring 2004 and raising \$13,000 in its first year in Grove's honor.

However, this year's event exceeded the women's expectations. Donations poured in and surpassed the original goal of \$20,000. The event also featured select auction items such as a Seahawks football signed by Matt Hasselbeck, which sold for \$1,500, and a signed Seattle SuperSonics basketball that sold for \$250.

"We need to start fighting this now, while we're healthy," Grove said after the performance. "These types of community events are what help people become educated and get involved, before they are touched by it personally."

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