

Steppin' out: Locals strap on dance shoes for charity event

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TRAVERSE CITY — Troy Broad sported a “Lean and Mean” T-Shirt at his first rehearsal for the SwingShift and the Stars Dance-Off for Charity.

The Elmer’s Crane & Dozer president shed 20 pounds in a workplace weight loss challenge in preparation for the event, which kicked off last week.

“I told (event creator) Judy Harrison if you can find somebody who can handle two left feet and a lot of thumbs, I’ll do it,” said Broad, one of six local “stars” who will compete to raise money for six local charities.

Broad, 46, will dance with instructor-partner Pam McCormick for Leelanau Christian Neighbors. The nonprofit combines efforts with 13 churches and provides food and resources to neighbors in need in Leelanau County.

“They have 150 volunteers and no paid staff. It’s a wonderful thing to invest in,” said Broad, a Christian businessman who recently hired a staff chaplain for his 430 employees.

Traci LeBlanc led Broad and McCormick through a foxtrot to the song, “Straighten Up and Fly Right.” She’ll choreograph the dances for all six couples.

“The most challenging thing is to simplify it,” said LeBlanc, a former professional ballroom dancer. “I get carried away and they look at me with deer-in-the-headlight eyes and I have to reel myself in.”

Competition events are Sept. 19, Oct. 17, Nov. 21 and Dec. 19 at the City Opera House. Audiences can vote for their favorite dance couple for a \$5 minimum donation to any of the six charities. Fans also can donate online.

Other contestants and their charities are Beth Footh and Hans Benghauser for BrickWays Foundation; Jeff Haas and Meghan Daigh for Building Bridges with Music; Jose Lopez and Liz Reincke for Justice For Our Neighbors; Brenda Welch and Danny Brizard for Conflict Resolution Services; and Heather Rassel and Cliff Shanoski for Mariposa Pathways.



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Traci LeBlanc, choreographer for SwingShift and the Stars Dance-Off for Charity, leads Troy Broad in the steps to a foxtrot as Pam McCormick follows along.

Lopez, associate pastor at Presbyterian Church, is the son of Mexican immigrants. His efforts to raise money and awareness for Central United Methodist Church's immigration ministry will allow the ministry to become a satellite clinic of Justice For Our Neighbors West Michigan, said Alline Beutler, chairman of the ministry's advisory board.

"That will allow us to hold clinics on a monthly basis to provide low-income immigrants with free or low-cost legal services to help through the process of immigration," said Beutler. "Currently there is no service like this north of Grand Rapids and Detroit. People would have to travel downstate. So this would be filling a hole in services."

The SwingShift and the Stars Dance-Off for Charity raised nearly \$690,000 for more than two dozen nonprofits during the past six years.

Tickets to this year's event range from \$20 for general admission to \$30 for main-floor table seats. They're available at swingshiftandthestars-tc.com or the City Opera House box office, 941-8082.