



HOT News from the Oxnard Salsa Festival

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Oxnard Salsa Festival Announces Six Stars for the 'Dancing with our Community Stars Dance Contest and Charity Fundraiser'

Oxnard, CA – Community leaders will dance for the greater good during the '2015 Dancing with our Community Stars Dance Contest and Charity Fundraiser' taking place during the 22nd Annual Oxnard Salsa Festival.

The 2015 line-up consists of six 'stars' who will take to the dance floor to raise much-needed funds for their charity of choice. The salsa-dance contest is patterned after ABC's hit TV show, 'Dancing with the Stars.' The contest features two men and four women who will be paired up with some of the region's best dance instructors to learn salsa moves and routines that will be performed in front of the audience at the Festival on Sunday, July 26 at 1 p.m. at Plaza Park in downtown Oxnard. Since its inception, the contest has raised over \$650,000 for local charities.

The dance competitors are as follows:

- **Christina Albert**, dancing for **Soroptomists International of Oxnard** with instructor, Jesse 'Chuy' Rodriguez;
- **Jim Duran**, Lead Pastor, River Community Church in Ventura & Director of The City Center Transitional Living, dancing for **The City Center** with instructor, Alethia Alvarez;
- **Meredith Garofalo**, Meteorologist/Reporter, KEYT- News 3, dancing for **Make-A-Wish Tri-Counties** with instructor, Jesus Garcia;
- **Mary Jo Fuentes Leste**, Owner of TLC Tender Loving Care Hospice, dancing for **Loving Heart Hospice Foundation** with instructor, Oswaldo Balcaceres;
- **Tyler Marie**, dancing for **Community Action of Ventura County**, with instructor Lovie Hernandez;
- **Edgar Mohorko, Jr.**, dancing for **Oxnard PAL, Police Activities League** with instructor, Diana Tere;

The dancers will be vying for the coveted 'Judge's Choice Award' for the best routine, while also competing for the 'People's Choice Award', which is awarded to the star who raises the most money for his or her charity. The fundraising campaign is underway and donations can be made online at www.oxnardsalsaFestival.com.

In addition, fundraising events will be hosted by participating charities during June and July, culminating during Festival weekend, July 25 & 26 when attendees can donate on site at the 'Dancing with our Community Stars' booth.

About this Year's Stars:

Christina Albert

Christina Albert has been a member of Soroptimist International of Oxnard for one year. She enjoys hiking, blogging and fashion. She is a Career Advisor and Founder of COVA Career & Fashion, an online blog featuring topics such as career, fashion, health, beauty and lifestyle, and providing young women with a platform to share their career journeys and challenges they may face.

Jim Duran

Ventura native Jim Duran shares his passion for his city by serving as the Lead Pastor of The River Community Church in Ventura, which his team began in 2004. Jim is also the Executive Director of the City Center Transitional Living and serves on the board for the Ventura Chamber of Commerce as well as the Ventura Family YMCA. To add to the list, he is the Vice President of the Ventura Buccaneer youth football organization and is actively involved with the Homeless to Home collaboration, Ventura Social Service Task Force, and Project Understanding. He has been awarded many honors for all his hard work and dedicated service within the community including the "Hometown Hero" award for the city of Ventura, Ventura's Citizen of the Year awarded by the Ventura Chamber of Commerce and the prestigious Golden Triangle Award presented by the Ventura Family YMCA. Jim and his wife Pam have been married for 26 years and have six children and a new grandchild.

Meredith Garofalo

Meredith Garofalo hopes to add 'a little extra sunshine to ones day' as the weekday KEYT News Channel 3 Morning Meteorologist. Meredith is also an accomplished singer and actress, performing the national anthem at more than 100 sports and charity events and also starred as "Rizzo" in Grease in 2013 at the Manatee Players in Florida. She loves giving back to the community and spends part of her spare time supporting charities such as Make-A-Wish Tri-Counties, Big Brothers Big Sisters, and the Red Cross to name a few. Meredith is a Cleveland girl who loves cheering on her hometown sports teams but happy to call SOCAL her home!

Mary Jo Fuentes Leste

Mary Jo is the owner of TLC Home Hospice and Founder of the Loving Heart Hospice Foundation. Born in Mexico, Mary Jo saw a need for extended care for the elderly and started TLC Home Hospice 22 years ago with her business partner, Shelley Chilton. She has continued to care for others and has served on the board for the Los Robles Regional Medical Center and was President and Vice President for the Ventura County Home Care Association. She currently continues to serve her community and is active on the La Reina High School Parent Guild, Crespi Carmelite Fundraising Committee, the Education Committee at St. Paschal Baylon Church, and is an active Board Member for the Loving Heart Hospice Foundation. When she is not out helping others, she loves to travel with her husband and two children.

Tyler Marie

Tyler is 19 years old and is currently a volunteer at Community Action of Ventura County. Tyler has danced with Pam Rossi's Dance Ten and is currently planning on attending Moorpark College in the fall. She loves her community and is a very giving person who likes to help others. She believes in the work that Community Action provides to the community and wants to help the agency achieve their mission.

Edgar Mohorko, Jr.

Edgar Mohorko, Jr. is an individual with Asperger's Syndrome, a high functioning form of autism. Contrary to what many believe, Edgar's 'disability' is in many ways a gift which allows him to do many things others can't. His ability to focus on a task and utilize his creativity has been a blessing to his family, church & our community. Beyond being Santa at the last Oxnard PAL Christmas event, Edgar acts, sings and writes fantasy stories and hopes to be a published author one day!

About the Dancers

The Oxnard Salsa Festival welcomes back Jesse 'Chuy' Rodriguez, Lovie Hernandez, Diana Tere, and Alethia Alvarez. New this year are Oswaldo Balcaceres, who teaches Salsa and Bachata at Borderline in Thousand Oaks and who is Director of the Saborlatino Salsa Dance Team and winner of the 2008 Salsa Dance Competition at Borderline. Also new is Jesus Garcia who came to the U.S. from Mexico City 10 years ago and who has been dancing all forms of Latin dance for over 30 years. He instructs Salsa dance lessons in Santa Barbara and his troupe, 'Salsa Elegante' performs at many local events helping students develop a positive lifestyle through dance.

About the Oxnard Salsa Festival

The Oxnard Salsa Festival was launched in 1994 by the Oxnard Downtowners to bring people into the downtown business district to celebrate Oxnard's multicultural heritage and agricultural roots. The Festival, which celebrates everything salsa.....the music, the food, and dance, runs from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. both days at Plaza Park, Fifth and 'B' Streets.

The 22nd Annual Oxnard Salsa Festival is presented by the Oxnard Downtowners, and sponsored by Gold Coast Broadcasting, Bud Light, Vallarta Supermarkets, Ventura County Star, and many other generous community partners.

For out-of-towners planning to attend the Oxnard Salsa Festival, why not make a weekend out of it? Oxnard's on-the-coast location makes for an ideal summer getaway. With two or more days in Oxnard, Festival-goers can enjoy a day at the beach, bike riding at the harbor, sport fishing, golf or even the Dallas Cowboys Training Camp in addition to all of the salsa festivities. Oxnard hotel options range from mid-priced rooms to oceanfront and seaside settings. For a listing of hotels and visitor attractions, visit www.visitoxnard.com or call the Oxnard Convention & Visitors Bureau at 1-800-2-Oxnard. **For Festival information, call 805-535-4060, or visit www.oxnardsalsafestival.com**

To learn more about the 'Dancing with our Community Stars Dance Contest and Charity Fundraiser' call Patty Brown at 805-607-9495 or email, patty@pattybrown.net.