



## 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 '2016 *Dancing with our Community Stars Dance Contest and Charity Fundraiser*' taking place during the 23<sup>rd</sup> Annual Oxnard Salsa Festival.

The 2016 line-up consists of six 'All Stars' who will take to the dance floor to raise much-needed funds for their charity of choice. The six former winners return to the festival for a special 10 year All Star Reunion. The salsa-dance contest is patterned after ABC's hit TV show, 'Dancing with the Stars.' The contest pairs the community stars 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 31 at 1 p.m. at Plaza Park in downtown Oxnard. Since its inception, the contest has raised over \$650,000 for local charities.

The All Star competitors are as follows:

- **Bonnie Atmore**, dancing for **FOOD Share** with instructor, Jesse 'Chuy' Rodriguez;
- **Pedro Chavez**, dancing for **Big Brothers, Big Sisters** with instructor, Diana Porter;
- **Mary Jo Fuentes Leste**, Owner of TLC Tender Loving Care Hospice, dancing for **Access TLC Hospice** with instructor, Ottis Gillespie;
- **Tammie Helmuth**, dancing for VCAS with instructor, Jesse 'Chuy' Rodriguez;
- **Seana-Marie Sesma.**, dancing for **Santa Paula Art Museum** with instructor, Lovie Hernandez;
- **Veronica Robles-Solis**, dancing for the Oxnard School District PTA Council with instructor, Jesus Garcia

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](http://www.oxnardsalsaFestival.com).

In addition, fundraising events will be hosted by participating charities during June and July, culminating during Festival weekend, July 30 & 31 when attendees can donate on site at the 'Dancing with our Community Stars' booth.

## **About this Year's Stars:**

### **Bonnie Atmore**

Bonnie Atmore is the CEO of FOOD Share, Ventura County's Food Bank. She has 17 years' experience in the corporate and nonprofit sector centered in sustainable strategic fund, resource, and organizational development. Under her leadership, FOOD Share has grown into a \$22 million public benefit corporation serving tens of thousands of families, seniors, and children with the help of over 100 not-for-profit partners and team of staff and volunteers. Atmore is a Governor appointed Director and President of the 31<sup>st</sup> California Agricultural District and a Trustee of the Ventura Coalition of Labor, Agriculture and Business Foundation and 2016 Chairperson for the World Affairs Council, Central Coast Chapter. She was awarded 2016 CEO of the Year by the San Fernando Valley Business Journal, recognized as the 'Top 50 Women in Business Award' every year from 2008-2016 and the Women's Economic Ventures Central Coast Trailblazer Award. Atmore is a third generation resident of Ventura County, is married to Richard Atmore and has two daughters ages 18 and 23.

### **Pedro Chavez**

Pedro Chavez has been involved with Big Brothers Big Sisters of Ventura County for many years serving as a 'Big Brother' to many youths. He is Director of Education & Public Affairs for the organization whose mission is to help children reach their full potential through professionally supported one-to-one, mentoring relationships with a measurable impact. The organization serves more than 900 at-risk kids and teens every year. "I am passionate about empowering our youth to become responsible and productive members of our society by serving as a champion for the cause of mentoring," stated Chavez. Chavez studied at UCLA and Cal Poly Pomona, graduating with a degree in Liberal Studies. He made a professional career serving the community in non-profit organizations in Los Angeles, Washington DC and Ventura County. He resides in the Santa Rosa Valley.

### **Tammie Helmuth**

Tammie Helmuth and her husband, Michael own and operate Conejo Awards. Helmuth has spent a lifetime working and volunteering in the non-profit sector and is currently the Chair of the Board of Girl Scouts of the Central Coast. She has received numerous awards including Rotarian of the Year by the Rotary Clubs of Downtown Ventura & TO Woman of the Year by the TO/Westlake Chamber of Commerce. She also won the Spirit of Small Business Award presented by the Pacific Coast Business Times. Conejo Awards has also won numerous local and State awards, including recognition as a 'green business leader'. Helmuth and her husband have 5 children and 2 Grandchildren.

### **Mary Jo Fuentes Leste**

As owner of TLC Home Hospice and Founder of Access TLC Hospice Foundation, Mary Jo Leste and her business partner, Shelley Chilton, saw the lack of continuity of care for patients at the end of life. Over twenty-three years ago, they began Access TLC Health Care which offers Hospice, Home Health, Caregiving, Skilled Nursing Facility, Transportation, and the Foundation. Leste is deeply committed to her community and demonstrates an amazing care, passion, and service to others. She grew-up in Mexico City, Mexico, is fluent in Spanish, and deeply loves working with and assisting the Hispanic community. Mary Jo is a former Board member for Los Robles Regional Medical Center. She is past President and Vice President for the Ventura County Home Care Association, serving in

those capacities for 6 years. She has also been 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 Access TLC Hospice Foundation. In her "spare" time, she loves to dance, swim, and travel with her husband Michael Leste and two children, Connor and Jade.

### **Seana Marie Sesma**

Seana-Marie Sesma is a Ventura County resident with a passion for creating powerful events for non-profit and charity programs that raise awareness and funds for the organizations. Her nickname, "Your PR girl" stands for Puerto Rican, Public Relations and Professional Resources! She is an Exhibit & Promotions Consultant with Xibeo (zib-Eo) in Oxnard. She is thrilled to be raising money for ARTSPARK ~ a Youth Arts Education Program for Ventura County youth through the Santa Paula Art Museum. Sesma resides in Ventura.

### **Veronica Robles-Solis**

Veronica Robles-Solis is Board President for the Oxnard School District since 2010. A UCLA graduate with a degree in Sociology, Solis is a Social Worker/Community Liaison for Among Friends Adult Day Health Care Center in Oxnard. She is a strong supporter of public education and believes in giving back to the community. Solis grew up in Oxnard where she currently lives with her husband, Alexander, and their two children.

### **About the Dancers**

The Oxnard Salsa Festival welcomes back Jesse 'Chuy' Rodriguez, Lovie Hernandez, and Diana Porter. New this year are Jesus Garcia who has over 30 years of extensive Salsa dancing experience. He won the Salsa Championship at Borderline in Thousand Oaks and enjoys performing with his team, 'Salsa Elegante' for local events. Also joining in this year is Ottis Gillespie who has trained with a number of top professionals and who has been teaching Salsa dancing for singles and couples at MacKinnon Dance Academy in Oxnard. He is also certified to teach Salsa dancing through Josie Neglia Dance Academy.

### **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 23<sup>rd</sup> Annual Oxnard Salsa Festival is presented by the Oxnard Downtowners, and sponsored by Gold Coast Broadcasting, Bud Light, Mission Foods, Ford, Pepsi, Premier America Credit Union, 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](http://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](http://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](mailto:patty@pattybrown.net).

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