



## Dancing with the West Texas Stars

Event benefits the Odessa Crisis Center

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David Boutin, Odessa market president of Frost Bank, doesn't usually dance on purpose, but he will be flexing his two-step muscles as one of the participants in Dancing with the West Texas Stars.

The event, which begins at 6:30 p.m. Saturday with cocktails at the MCM Grandé Hotel and FunDome, 6201 E. Business 20, is a fundraiser for the Crisis Center, which provides shelter and crisis response services to victims of domestic and sexual violence and education programs that promote safety

and healthy relationships, according to its website.

Boutin and his partner is Eva Garcia, physical therapy director at Medical Center Hospital, will be tripping the light fantastic to a two-step. He said Garcia has danced in competitions with her husband and is quite accomplished.

"I suspect that the definition of dancing will probably change following Feb. 20," Boutin joked.

Seriously, though, Boutin said he was working pretty hard and had made some progress. "I think I will probably provide a lot of humor to some people. I'm working at it to try and do as well as I can," he added.

Boutin said the event is a nice way to raise money for the Crisis Center.

"... It's an agency that unfortunately every community needs," he said. "They provide services to the community that are vital. They really make a difference."

In 2013, the most recent statistics available, the Texas Department of Public Safety said there were 2,676 cases of domestic violence in Ector County compared to 898 in Midland County, Crisis Center Executive Director Karen Hildebrand said. She added that the counties have similar populations with 149,000 people in Ector County and 151,000 in Midland County.

Hildebrand, who also is organizing Dancing with the West Texas Stars, said Monday she had only six tables left. “So we’re virtually sold out again, and this year, we expanded the ballroom size,” she said.

Last year, there were 59 tables and this year, there are 90, Hildebrand said.

Along with Boutin, this year’s local celebrities include Dr. Sudip Bose, Dr. Carl Brown, Marshall Hughes, Gaven Norris, Jane Boles, Jennifer Cobos, Peggy Dean, Victoria Printz, Nancy Stewart and Denise Swanner, according to the Crisis Center website.

Center Stage, Love To Dance Studio, Enrique Romero, representing West Texas Salseros, and Elegance Ballroom in Midland contributed dance instruction, Hildebrand said.

The idea for the benefit came up at a regional meeting of other domestic violence and sexual assault centers that Hildebrand attended when she first started at the Crisis Center. Hildebrand said someone at the meeting said the dancing with the stars benefit was one of the best she’d ever been to, so Hildebrand called to ask for details.

The event is being chaired by Lori White. Emcees are Joe James, a participant last year, and Shelby Landgraf.

“We’ve had great success,” Hildebrand said of the event. “The best thing about this fundraiser is that the stars are the ones that raise the money for the agency. They have just really hit the bushes and been very successful so far. ...”

Whoever raises the most money among the contestants wins a big mirror ball trophy, Hildebrand said. The night of the event people attending vote for the best male dancer, best female dancer, most entertaining and best costume, she added.

Dean, a certified public accountant, is taking part for the first time. Her partner is Enrique Romero, representing West Texas Salseros and they will be dancing salsa.

“It’s a really fun event,” Dean said. She added that it raises money for a good cause.

“... The tables are selling out and, of course, the professional dancers that are giving their time to teach us non-professionals really need a lot of praise because they just volunteer their time to do this,” Dean said.

Dean said she loves to dance, but she and her husband mainly take to the floor for country-western dancing. “This is much more formal learned dancing. It’s really fun, but it’s really a challenge and it’s a great workout,” she said.

She added that she believes in the Crisis Center, too.

Dean said she's not worried about dancing in front of a large audience. "I've never had a hard time laughing at myself," she added. If she forgets the dance, she said she would just laugh and invite the audience to join her.

"... I'm not nervous I'm just excited. I'm sure the closer you get, the more nerves you get, but I do have a fabulous partner and he's a really good teacher. He's very, very easy to follow so that makes me a whole lot less nervous," Dean said.

Swanner is another first year dancer. She's presenting the Junior League of Odessa. Her partner is Lonnie Harper with Love To Dance Studio, with their swing dance choreographed by Ronnie and Ronnie Reynosa.

"It's been fun," Swanner said. "... I've never had dance lessons in my life. I've never danced. At my age, it's very challenging but it's been very fun and very rewarding at the same time because I'm getting to do something I've always wanted to do."

Plus, she gets to raise funds for the Crisis Center.

She said dancing in front of a crowd is "definitely out of my comfort zone."

"I try not to think about it," Swanner added.

But she is looking forward to it. She and her husband are even talking about taking dance lessons when the benefit is over.

New this year is diamond desserts where donated jewelry from Sam L. Majors, Fisher Jewelers and Johnna Rosson will be put into cupcakes, Hildebrand said. The auction for those treats will be at 8 p.m.

The Spazmatics will play from 9 to 10:30 p.m. while the votes are tallied and the mirror ball trophy and other awards will be presented at 10:30 p.m., according to the Crisis Center.

Hildebrand said the Crisis Center has five outreach offices and to keep its doors open and its education programs going, she has to raise \$400,000, not including the government grants the center receives and the benefit helps fill that gap.

"I'm really pleased with outpouring of support from the community," Hildebrand said.

She added that Crisis Center also is kicking off a campaign for a new shelter. The current leased facility is leased and has seven bedrooms and three bathrooms that 29 people share, Hildebrand said.

The City of Odessa has donated land for a new facility. Now Hildebrand said Crisis Center needs \$5 million to make it a reality.

“We expect it to take two to three years to raise that amount of money, but we’re determined to have a shelter in Odessa,” Hildebrand said. She added that she would like to make the new shelter comfortable and safe for families escaping the trauma of domestic violence.

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