

A Toast to the Sandhills Stars

Ginger Rogers with a Latin beat



By ROBYN JAMES

I've been in the wine business more years than I care to admit, obtained various levels of industry certification and I suppose I should be happy that our community philanthropists recognize that all this study and hard work has qualified me to... dance.

My friend Kristen Palmer was a contestant of Dancing With The Sandhills Stars in 2009, it's inaugural year. As friends will, I ribbed her about her 70's hustle dance from time to time. She paid me back by suggesting that I would be a great contestant for this year.

At first, I waived, and then caved because when it comes to children and animals, I can be a soft touch. This event benefits Communities In Schools and Moore Buddies, undeniably two of our most dynamic programs in this county. I am especially proud of the IBM Mentor Place in Robbins since my son works for IBM in Texas.

I figured, how hard can this be?

I must admit, I was not the girly-girl growing up. My mother never pointed me toward ballet, tap dancing or even cheerleading. No, she plopped me on horses, threw a basketball in my hand and cheered me on during track meets. However, I did graduate from East Carolina, and it's impossible to do that without shagging a time or two.

It took me a while, but I convinced my friend, Phil, that he should dance with me for this incredible cause. Although re-

luctant at first, now Phil is a regular Ricky Ricardo and I'm still Lucille Ball. But, he's doing a great job coaching me and counting us through the steps.

The Fred Astaire Studio in Pinehurst is a huge sponsor of this event and we ventured there for our lessons to prepare for the big day. What an awesome place! The studio is teeming with incredibly talented and patient instructors transforming people like us into fledgling dancers. Bruce, one of the owners is our teacher and he is the quintessential optimist! He showed us all the moves, including a dip that sent me to the chiropractor the next day. Just kidding.

We chose a Latino dance and after four lessons, practicing every night, we finally memorized what we had learned and timed our new routine. It was one minute.

I couldn't believe it, only one minute. Oh well, thank goodness the routine only has to be 90 seconds. I thought that sounded short, but now it seems like a lifetime.

There are 16 couples competing at the Carolina Hotel on Sunday, January 30 beginning at 5 p.m.

This event has become not only their biggest fund raiser, but a hugely popular event in attendance, it sold out early last year.

Of course, I could be Ginger Rogers on the dance floor and still lose. This event is all about THE MONEY!! The couple that wins is the one that raises the most money for these incredible causes, so please help us out. Go to www.sandhillsstars.com and vote for Robyn and Phil, or heck, vote for anybody. It's a great cause and a fun event! **PS**



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