



## News from the Oxnard Salsa Festival

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### Salsa Instructors Share Moves, Spice Up Charity Dance Contest

*Professional salsa dancers donate time, talent for 2010 Oxnard Salsa Festival's  
Dancing with Our Community Stars competition*

(Oxnard, Calif.) - When **Kelly Richardson** was paired up with Art Chaparro, Aspiranet's Director of Development, to participate in the Oxnard Salsa Festival's 2010 Dancing with Our Community Stars (DWOCS) competition, little did she know that she would discover another passion in addition to dancing – helping foster children.

Chaparro, who is dancing for Ventura County foster children programs, has no formal dance training. Richardson, an investment bank receptionist by day and salsa teacher and performer by night, volunteered her time to teach Chaparro how to perform "the hammerlock, grapevine and the gentlemen's break." These salsa moves will be a part of their routine when they step on to the dance floor at the Oxnard Salsa Festival's Dancing with Our Community Stars July 25<sup>th</sup> competition.

"I had been praying to find an avenue that would allow me to use my passion for dance to help others," said Richardson. "Meeting Art and learning more about Aspiranet was an answer to this prayer."

Richardson, who teaches private and group salsa lessons at Isabelle's Dance Academy in Santa Monica and performs salsa and Flamenco throughout Southern California, plans to continue her support of Aspiranet after the DWOCS competition ends by volunteering to teach foster teens how to dance.

"There is such a sense of empowerment and confidence that develops in people when they learn new skills, such as dance," said Richardson. "I believe that confidence could serve as a source of inspiration for foster children and help them find their inner hero."

Richardson is just one of six professional salsa dance instructors paired with the community dancers to choreograph and polish their routines. The couples, each dancing for a different charitable organization, are given six short weeks to learn their routines and then, on July 25<sup>th</sup>, compete at the Oxnard Salsa Festival in front of a panel of judges and thousands of audience members. The popular vote, measured by the amount of money each charity dancer collects, determines the winner.

**Hector Sanchez**, who is dancing with Mary Olson, General Manager for KCLU Radio, is no stranger to the DWOCS competition. Sanchez, a past performer, is volunteering as an instructor for the second year in a row.

"I love Dancing with our Community Stars," said Sanchez. "It is a great way to energize the community about dance and at the same time, raise funds for worthy charities."

Sanchez, who comes from a dancing family, started his own salsa club while in high school and is currently a member and dance instructor of the prestigious Santa Barbara Dance Center. In addition to being a student at UCSB and working full-time, Sanchez owns his own dance performance company, called *Justbaila*. By the July 25<sup>th</sup> competition showdown, Sanchez and Olson will have practiced their routine together for over 30 hours.

"The connection between partners is the most important component of a successful dance routine," said Sanchez. "This year, my partner is very hardworking and competitive. Our passions balance each other perfectly."

The other DWOCS salsa instructors in this year's competition are:

- **Vanessa Hernandez**, a teacher at Ventura's House of Dance, who has been dancing since age three. She is paired with Doug Green, who is dancing for The Social Justice Fund for Ventura County.
- **Jesse "Chuy" Rodriguez**, an Oxnard and Los Angeles dance champion. Rodriguez was the 2009 winner of the DWOCS Dance Contest with partner and FOOD Share CEO Bonnie Weigel. This year he is teamed with Jax Rains-Turk who is dancing for Girl Scouts of California's Central Coast.
- **Ricky Campos**, director of Oxnard's Reyes De La Rumba dance team, which has been representing Oxnard in Salsa Congresses nationwide for the past 11 years. Campos is paired with Sandra Laby, who is dancing for the Ventura Music Festival and performing on her 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary.
- **Christina Maggio**, has traveled and taught dance throughout the tri-counties, El Salvador, and Mexico. Maggio is partnered with Will Reed, who dancing for St. Vincent de Paul/Winter Warming Shelter.

The real winners of the Dancing with Our Community Stars competition are the six participating nonprofit organizations. This fundraising opportunity has raised more than \$115,000 over three years for local charities.

Dancing With Our Community Stars is being held at the Oxnard Salsa Festival on Sunday, July 25<sup>th</sup> at 1 p.m. at Plaza Park in downtown Oxnard. To learn more about the competition and vote for your favorite charity and dancing couple, go to [www.oxnardsalsafestival.com](http://www.oxnardsalsafestival.com).

**more**

## **About the Oxnard Salsa Festival:**

Dancing With Our Community Stars is one of many attractions at the Oxnard Salsa Festival taking place July 24-25, 2010 at Plaza Park in downtown Oxnard. Presented by the Oxnard Downtowners, the Festival is a two-day celebration of everything salsa ... the food, the music, and the dance. The event features the region's top Salsa and Latin Jazz bands, non-stop salsa dancing, marketplace shopping, Kids Korner attractions, a Salsa Tasting Tent, international foods, and more. The Festival runs from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. both days. Admission and parking are free. [www.oxnardsalsafestival.com](http://www.oxnardsalsafestival.com)

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