

Swingshift

By Brad Harrison

Lou Grettenberg and Kat Brown



Why would three grown men, all leaders in our community, willingly set themselves up for potential pain, humiliation and ridicule? For charity, of course! The men in question, Mike Anton, Lou Grettenberger, and Bill Marsh, Jr., all agreed to participate in the first ever "Swingshift and the Stars Dance-Off for Charity". This exciting event has paired six local "celebrities" and six local dance instructors with six local charities in a ballroom dance competition to raise money for the charities. Based on the early results, the pain may be real, but there is no sign of any humiliation or ridicule.

Swingshift and the Stars Dance-Off for Charity is the brainchild of local entertainer Judy Harrison, who was looking for a way to use her performing

skills to give something back to the community. Inspired by the success of ABC's Dancing With The Stars and blessed with her talented swing band, Swingshift, all that was needed was to identify three men and three women who were willing to take the huge risk of facing the spotlight and dancing in front of hundreds of people. That's where Mike, Lou and Bill come into the picture.

"Oh well, I only had three days to practice. Go for it! So we did!"

Local auto dealer Bill Marsh, Jr., was the first celebrity to sign on. When asked if he would consider participating, he was enthusiastic from

the start. "While I would like to tell you how I searched deep inside myself and discovered an inner courage that enabled me to rise to this challenge, the truth is I wasn't thinking about the anxiety-filled prospect of dancing in front of people. Frankly, I was honored to have been asked to participate, I couldn't say 'no' to Judy, and, I really didn't think ballroom dancing would be that hard to learn. I was wrong!" Bill and his partner, Jennifer Howard, are dancing for House of Hope, an organization with which he has had a longtime relationship.

Suttons Bay resident Mike Anton is a real estate investor and C.P.A. His partner is Liz Reincke, and they dance to support the American Cancer Society. A chance encounter with the event emcee for Swingshift and the Stars before a Swingshift show at the Traverse City

Opera House led to his involvement. Mike, who was unfamiliar with the band, was having dinner with his wife, Jill, when Jennifer Allen approached him about participating. After a great deal of consternation, he agreed, noting, "Judy pointed out that the songs were only

I figured, 'Oh well, I only had three days to practice. Go for it!' So we did!" Lou and his partner, Kat Brown, are dancing for Safe Harbor, a charity that Lou and his church actively support.

The three men have had to overcome many difficulties to compete and improve

being at the dances. There is a real sense of purpose and community among the dancers and charity supporters and leaders. We're all in this together." Participating in the dance-off has given Bill Marsh the opportunity to set an example for his staff: "As a businessman

Jennifer Howard and Bill Marsh Jr.



Mike Anton and Liz Reincke

ninety seconds long. I thought, 'I can make a fool of myself for ninety seconds for charity.'"

Lou Grettenberger is the pastor of Christ United Methodist Church in Traverse City. After one of the celebrities was forced to remove himself from the competition three days before the first show, Lou was brave enough to step into the spotlight. "Being asked as a last minute fill-in was kind of exciting. I knew that I was saying 'yes' to a question that probably many people wouldn't have been able to answer in the affirmative. I was thinking that taking risk, being vulnerable, is part of continuing to grow as a person. I was excited, but after three rapid-fire phone calls from Judy, the promotions people for a head shot, and the dance shoe sales person, I thought, 'Uh-oh!' The first time I danced,

each month. Though successful in their chosen fields, nervousness and anxiety about dancing before an enormous crowd is always there. Hours of practice and competition have left their bodies bruised and constantly sore.

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But the good things about this experience far outweigh the bad. As Lou puts it, "Sometimes I surprise myself and, with Kat's help, actually pull it off. That's a great feeling. It's fun seeing how much everyone enjoys

in a competitive, performance-based industry, I have preached to my people for years about the importance of stepping out beyond your comfort zone in order to grow as a person. Having the opportunity to practice what I preach has been awesome!" Mike has enjoyed all the fun and joking about his participation and, on top of it all, notes, "I am actually learning to be a better dancer."

Through the efforts of the celebrities, their partners, Swingshift, and many volunteers, Swingshift and the Stars Dance-off for Charity has raised over \$18,000 in the three events held to date. Audiences will have two more opportunities to get in on the fun and help support six great charities in their work.

Visit www.swingshiftandthestars.com for more information.