



American DanceWheels Foundation, Inc.

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December, 2009

Dear Friends,

Ballroom and Latin Dancers using wheelchairs will be featured in a new television series, *Dancing on Wheels*, debuting next year in the United Kingdom. News about this innovative and controversial dance show created a buzz in the U.S. and producers from *America's Got Talent* asked American DanceWheels Foundation to audition for their show. We sent two couples to New York City for last month's audition where they were met with curiosity and accolades from the judges. Winners will be announced in February, so keep your fingers crossed for our entrants!

ADF highlights this past year included a three-page article in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* about our own Reesa Marchetti and husband Dan. Reesa has had her own band for over thirty years and uses a power wheelchair to dance. She and Dan dance a mean Fox Trot and always bring the house down when they perform. You can read Reesa's story on our website, and yes, Reesa is as colorful on the dance floor as she is in life!!

We continued our popular dance program for the students at **Widener Memorial School**, with standing partner volunteers from Temple and Penn Charter School – many thanks to The Hassel Foundation and Prudential Fox Roach Realtors for continuing to sponsor this fabulously successful program! A major grant from The Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation grant, that enabled us to **establish** the first nationally **accredited course in Wheelchair Ballroom and Latin Dance** at the University of Delaware, has brought interest from other universities. Most notable are Temple University (Philadelphia), Ball State University (Indiana), and Rowan University (New Jersey). And, the University of Pennsylvania Dance Team students staged a unique fundraising event this month to benefit ADF – *Dancing with the Professors!* ADF provided performances during the intermissions.

In July, ballroom teachers and therapy professionals from North Carolina to Canada attended **ADF's Teachers' Seminar**, an intensive 21-hour weekend training program using the WheelOne™ syllabus. All eight, including a former U.S. Marine, successfully completed the training to become **certified ADF Affiliate Instructors**. The training seminars are critical to helping to introduce more people to wheelchair ballroom dancing around the country.

Many thanks to those of you who supported **ADF's Jenna Kremer Memorial Fund**. Your contributions funded lessons for students at the Atrium and Crystal Dance Studios, and paid for private instruction for our ADF dance team and our junior performance group at Widener Memorial School. Here's an example of **how this support makes an impact**: Because of the program at Widener, 19-year old wheelchair dancer Christopher has become one of our most accomplished high school senior wheelchair dancers and junior performers. According to Christopher's mother, the wheelchair dancing has not only given Christopher new confidence and self-esteem, it is having a positive effect on the entire family. Her other three children, one of whom also uses a wheelchair for mobility, want to take dance lessons together. We get so many requests from parents who want their children to take wheelchair dance lessons but do not have the means to afford after-school programs. One of our dreams is to have dedicated, accessible studio space with a funding stream to make such programs possible.

Widener students Christopher Brown and Erica Belleby represented ADF at the **9th Annual World Hustle Dance Championship** in East Brunswick, New Jersey in October. Christopher performed the Cha-Cha with Melinda while Erica danced the Tango with Rob Hansberry. And, Diane Murphy and Randall Herbein performed a captivating Waltz. The crowd cheered all three couples, visibly impressed by their performances.

Great performances are our signature at ADF. Audiences at Temple University, Rowan University, Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital, Lafayette Redeemer Hospital, Neumann College's Veterans Benefits and Resources Forum, at Easter Seals in New Castle, Delaware, and other community sites have been thrilled by our dancers. **ADF introduced ballroom dance teachers, therapists and physical education professionals to the possibilities in working with wheelchair dancers.**

ADF performances have sparked interest at several organizations to create new programs for children and adults with disabilities. In addition to the aforementioned university interest, we are particularly excited about an invitation from **Moss Rehabilitation Hospital** to conduct a wheelchair dance program at their suburban location – our **first ongoing program sponsored by a major rehabilitation center** in the Delaware Valley. This supports our recent decision to focus our teaching and training resources toward those who are regularly interacting with people with disabilities, and in the best position to introduce the benefits (and fun!) of ballroom dancing to wheelchair users. In fact, we were pleased to be mentioned by Dr. Sheila A. Ward of Norfolk State University, Virginia, in her article, *So You Think You Can't Dance?* The article, which appeared in **Diabetes Self-Management Magazine**, highlighted the therapeutic benefits of dancing for weight control, strengthening bones and muscles, increasing coordination, and socializing.

Even more exciting, ADF has been invited by the **Spinal Cord Injury Center of Palo Alto, California**, to participate in a proposed study with spinal cord injured veterans to research the physical and mental health benefits of ballroom dancing. A similar study researching the effects of ballroom and Latin dancing for people with Parkinson's disease proved such significant benefits that the Parkinson's community has embraced dancing as an ongoing therapy. We hope that the Palo Alto study will also confirm the significant benefits of wheelchair dancing, and will provide ADF with the clinical data to promote its therapeutic effects to the community. The SCIC research specialist hopes to extend the study to the National Institutes of Health, Walter Reed Medical Center and other research hospitals over time. Funding is being sought to support this program for 2010.

We know that you are carefully considering your year-end support of charities and good works, and hope you will **continue your important support benefiting people with disabilities**. Because more than ever, we want you to be our partners in spreading the benefits and fun of wheelchair ballroom dancing!

We still have **no salaried positions** in the organization and **every single dollar donated to ADF supports programs and the mission**. The money goes toward programs, performances and outreach at community and disability venues where ADF convinces the general public and people with and without disabilities that *everyone* can dance. Browse our website at <http://americandancewheels.org> to see all of our 2009 programs, events, news, videos, and photos.

ADF relies heavily on your generous support year to year. **One hundred percent of your gift supports programming that enhances the lives of people with disabilities.** Please send in your generous gift today!

Thank you so much for your past support and your thoughtful consideration of our request – especially this year.

Best wishes,

Stephanie

Stephanie Maguire, Chair
ADF Board of Directors

P.S. You can donate online at <http://americandancewheels.org/SupportUs.html>!