



Prepared by: Abilis  
[abilis.us](http://abilis.us)

Contact: Jenifer Howard | 203-273-4246  
[jhoward@jhowardpr.com](mailto:jhoward@jhowardpr.com)  
Erica Klair | 203-249-4878  
[klair@abilis.us](mailto:klair@abilis.us)

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## **Cha-Cha for a Cause! 6th Annual Dancing Stars of Greenwich Charity Fundraiser for Abilis to Dance the Night Away on September 21**

*Charity Dance-Off by The Fred Astaire Dance Studio of Greenwich Features Celebrity Judges and Dancers — Competing for the Coveted Mirrorball Trophy*

**GREENWICH**, Conn., August 13, 2024 — Get ready for an evening that brings the glamour and glitz of legendary dancer Fred Astaire to Greenwich! The sixth annual ***Dancing Stars of Greenwich*** charity dance-off, hosted by **The Fred Astaire Dance Studio of Greenwich** to benefit **Abilis**, showcases the thrill of the hit TV show *Dancing with the Stars* with a celebrity dance-off right in Greenwich, Connecticut, featuring local celebrities and professional dance performances by the Fred Astaire dancers. *Dancing Stars of Greenwich* is taking center stage on **Saturday, September 21, 2024**, at the Tamarack Country Club in Greenwich. Tickets to this fabulous event, full of incredible dancing, live music, a VIP champagne reception, silent auction, dinner, and celebrity judges, sell out quickly every year, so it is recommended to reserve a table today by calling 203-340-2760 or by visiting [greenwichdancingstars.com](http://greenwichdancingstars.com).

This year's event features celebrity judges **Brendan Fraser**, a celebrated and award-winning actor; **Billy Blanks, Jr.**, a celebrity fitness guru, choreographer and founder of the popular dance fitness program, *Dance It Out*; **Taylor Shoji**, professional dancer and choreographer; and is emceed by **Ali Wentworth**, actress, comedian, producer, host of her podcast *Go Ask Ali* and New York Times bestselling author.

"*Dancing Stars of Greenwich* is one of our favorite events of the year," noted Amy Montimurro, CEO and president of Abilis. "The glitz and the glamour is incredible! We are especially thankful to Afton and Brendan Fraser, parents of one of our Abilis community members, who originally brought the idea of *Dancing Stars* to Abilis six years ago and have supported it and Abilis ever since. It's really wonderful to see the community come out and support us through this fun event and we are very appreciative to The Fred Astaire Studio of Greenwich who continue to hold *Dancing Stars* each year in support of Abilis."

Funds raised at the event this year will go toward the development and renovation of Abilis Gardens & Gifts, Abilis' retail and garden center training site located in the Glenville section of Greenwich. Abilis Gardens & Gifts provides much needed retail job skills and training to adults with disabilities and helps provide meaningful employment opportunities. Abilis Gardens & Gifts is one of seven businesses owned and operated by Abilis, each playing a pivotal role in empowering individuals with disabilities to

achieve greater independence and self-sufficiency. The support of *Dancing Stars of Greenwich* will directly impact the lives of individuals with disabilities by creating a vibrant new space where they can learn, grow, and thrive.

*Dancing Stars of Greenwich* mirrors the hit TV show and features a Dancing with the Stars dance competition where community and business leaders are paired with Fred Astaire Dance professionals to perform their own personalized routines with their own dance style of their choice. The celebrity panel of judges determines the winner of the coveted Mirror Ball Trophy. A People's Choice Award is given to the dancer who raises the most in donations for Abilis.

Dancers at the event include: **Afton Fraser** of Greenwich, Connecticut; **Heather Rosenstein-Sarachek** of Scarsdale, New York; **Robin Arnold** of New York City; **Carly Samalin**, age 15, of Greenwich, Connecticut, who won the Greenwich Dancing Stars dance competition and the People's Choice Winner award in 2022; **Isabelle Vanneck** of Greenwich, Connecticut; **Danny Clarke**, an Abilis community member who lives in Greenwich, Connecticut; **Sara Keller** of Riverside (Greenwich), Connecticut; **Shari Aser** of Greenwich, Connecticut, who won last year's Mirrorball trophy; **Michela Bunn** of Rye, New York, **Anja Jancke-Souhr** of New York, New York, and **Elaine Madonna** of Greenwich, Connecticut, who has participated for several years in a row and previously won the People's Choice Award.

Each dancer is paired with a professional partner from The Fred Astaire Studio of Greenwich and include: **Elmar Schmidt** and **Clemens Lengenfelder**, co-owners of The Fred Astaire Studio of Greenwich, **Matthew Ames**, **Carol Koutouvides**, and **Christian Perry**.

"Dancing is what we do and hosting *Dancing Stars of Greenwich* is just one of our most favorite events ever," noted Elmar Schmidt, co-owner of The Fred Astaire Studio of Greenwich. "Local stars and leaders in the community have been training for months to compete just like on television. Our panel of celebrity judges, along with the audience, selects the winner who will win the coveted Mirror Ball trophy. The dancers who raise the most for Abilis also win the People's Choice award. It is so exciting!"

Brendan and Afton Fraser have been long-time supporters of Abilis and *Dancing Stars of Greenwich* throughout the years and are once again co-hosting the event. They are also parents to a son with disabilities and know personally how crucial programs and supports like Abilis offers are to families with children and adults with disabilities.

"It's been wonderful these past six years to support Abilis and *Dancing Stars of Greenwich*," noted Afton Fraser. "We know first-hand how much it means to a family to have an organization like Abilis that can help provide training, education, social and employment opportunities for individuals and their families. It can mean the difference between living an isolated life and one full of friends and with meaning. They are really a great organization, and we are happy to help in any way we can."

To reserve tickets or donate by supporting the dancers, please visit [greenwichdancingstars.com](https://greenwichdancingstars.com).

**Abilis** is a 501c3 non-profit organization that supports more than 800 individuals with disabilities and their families from birth throughout their lives. Founded in 1951, Abilis is

a leader in providing meaningful supports to the community in Fairfield County, Connecticut, in towns including Darien, Greenwich, New Canaan, Norwalk, Ridgefield, Stamford, Westport and Wilton. The organization has a long-standing reputation for individualized, high-quality care. For more information, visit [www.abilis.us](http://www.abilis.us), or follow on Facebook [@Abilis, Inc.](https://www.facebook.com/AbilisInc), Instagram [@abilis\\_us](https://www.instagram.com/abilis_us) or Twitter [@Abilis](https://twitter.com/Abilis).

**Fred Astaire Dance Studio of Greenwich** provides ballroom and Latin dance lessons to all ages and attracts participants from the Greenwich, Stamford, and New Canaan, Connecticut, areas, and Armonk, Harrison, White Plains, Port Chester, Rye, Mamaroneck, and Scarsdale, New York, areas. There is no partner or experience necessary to enjoy ballroom dance lessons. Fred Astaire Dance Studio has made it its personal mission to touch as many lives with a passion for ballroom dancing. The Fred Astaire Dance Studio is one of the happiest, friendliest spots in town due to the welcoming and encouraging staff and atmosphere. Fred Astaire's mission is to enrich the lives of everyone and anyone with dance. The organization genuinely strives to make dance a daily practice in the dance studio. Fred Astaire doesn't just teach someone how to dance, they invite them to become their personal best - in their dancing and in all areas of their life. Fred Astaire Dance Studio of Greenwich is co-owned by Elmar Schmidt and Clemens Lengenfelder, along with their wives Isabell Schmidt and Jessica Lengenfelder. To learn more, visit [fredastaire.com/greenwich](http://fredastaire.com/greenwich).

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