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5th Annual Dancing Stars of Greenwich Smashed Records with Raising Close to \$200,000 for Abilis!

Charity Dance-Off Put on by The Fred Astaire Dance Studio of Greenwich As a Fundraiser for Abilis Featured Celebrity Judges and Dancers Competing for the Coveted Mirrorball Trophy

GREENWICH, Conn., September 27, 2023 —The 5th annual **Dancing Stars of Greenwich** tangoed its way to a big finish with a sold-out crowd, celebrity emcee **Ali Wentworth** and celebrity judges **Brendan Fraser, Meg Tolin Piper and Eric “Champagne” Shoji**, as well as 12 pairs of star dancers! The event, presented by the **Fred Astaire Dance Studio of Greenwich** in support of **Abilis**, was a smashing success and raised an incredible \$191,520 for Abilis, which will go toward supporting the acquisition and renovation of new program space for Abilis.

“This was one of the most successful Dancing Stars of Greenwich events ever,” noted Amy Montimurro, CEO of Abilis. “The glitz, the glamour and all of the dancers were phenomenal! All of us at Abilis are beyond grateful that they danced their way to raising close to \$200,000 for Abilis — it is incredible. The funds will go toward supporting a new building in Stamford that will house additional Abilis programs and services. We are so grateful for everything the Fred Astaire Dance Studio and all of the participants continually do to support Abilis.”

Winner of the coveted Mirrorball Trophy for best dancer went to **Shari Aser** of Greenwich, who danced to the theme song for *Barbie* with her dance partner and co-owner of the Fred Astaire Dance Studio of Greenwich, **Elmar Schmidt**. Winner of the People’s Choice award for most funds raised went to **Elaine Madonna** of Greenwich, who has danced in the event for several years, and this year participated with her dance partner **Clemens Lengenfelder**, co-owner of the Fred Astaire Dance Studio of Greenwich. Elaine Madonna single-handedly garnered \$25,000 in donations of the total amount raised at the event through her own fundraising.

The other dancers were: **Afton Fraser** of Greenwich; **Amy Farber** of Greenwich; **Daniella Mini** of Greenwich; **Dr. Jennifer Werely** of Greenwich; **Kristy Hickman** of Norwalk; **Lauren Eisler and Benjamin (Benji) Rabinowitz** of New York, New York; **Paul Scicchitano** of Greenwich; **Terry Lamantia Cataldo** of Greenwich; **Makeda Mays-Green and Kenny Green** of Stamford; and **Trevor Crow** of Greenwich.

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

“What a night of incredible dancing by all of our dancers,” said Elmar Schmidt. “If you didn’t

know you were in Greenwich, you would have thought you were really on the set of the hit TV show DWTS! I'm so proud of everyone. The hours of practice really paid off and the dancers all worked really hard at generating 'votes,' which were actually donations for Abilis. Well done by all!"

Dancing Stars of Greenwich was inspired by long-time Fred Astaire Dance Studio participant Afton Fraser and Fred Astaire Dance Studio co-owner Elmar Schmidt. Afton and Brendan Fraser have been long-time supporters of Abilis and as parents to a son with disabilities, know personally how crucial programs and supports like Abilis offer are to families with children and adults with disabilities. When Elmar Schmidt learned of the connection, he and his team knew that supporting Abilis with Dancing Stars of Greenwich was the right thing to do.

"We are proud to support Dancing Stars of Greenwich and Abilis raise funds for Abilis' programs and services," said Afton Fraser. "We know how much it means to a family to have an organization like Abilis that can help provide training, education, social, residential 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."

Those who are interested in supporting the event and Abilis can still donate at greenwichdancingstars.com or abilis.us.

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, or follow on Facebook @Abilis, Inc., Instagram @abilis_us or Twitter @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.

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