

## **First Annual Partner Dance Showcase Fundraiser For Camp Ta-Kum-Ta raises \$1728.20**

St. Albans, VT, September 20, 2004 – Amid four hours of twirling skirts, gliding steps, arials and lifts, volunteer dance instructors and dance enthusiasts raised more than \$1,700 for Camp Ta-Kum-Ta last Friday night.

The first-of-its kind local event took place Friday, Sept. 17, featuring a dance demonstration showcase at the Elly-Long Music Center at St. Michael's College. The show, free waltz lesson and open dancing were well-attended and raised over \$1,700 for Vermont's camp for children who have, or who have had, cancer.

Jim Noyes, personnel director for Camp Ta-Kum-Ta, accepted the funds on behalf of the camp.

"The performance was incredible, it celebrated two of the things that everyone enjoys most about camp, music and dancing. Raising over seventeen hundred dollars makes this event above average for our fundraisers. However the dance showcase was really different from other fundraisers because it focused on the arts, and that means a lot to me personally," he said.

Camp Ta-Kum-Ta is a week-long residential camping experience for children, ages seven to 17, who have, or have had, cancer. Founded in 1984, Camp Ta-Kum-Ta is now in its 20th year of serving Vermont children. Camp Ta-Kum-Ta was named when children talked about the Camp in a clinic waiting room at the hospital. One child was too young to attend, and said in frustration, "but I wanna camp ta come ta." That child's wish became the camp's name, Ta-Kum-Ta, and that child is a long-time camper who is now a Camp staff member. Camp Ta-Kum-Ta is funded entirely by private donations, is staffed completely by volunteers, and offers its programming at no cost to the children.

The fundraisers' organizer, Kevin Laddison of St. Albans, knew nothing about Camp Ta-Kum-Ta last year.

"Last February I heard about a fundraising dinner-dance, and went just for the dancing. While there I met a previous Ta-Kum-Ta camper, and a couple of the volunteer staff and learned about the camp," said Laddison.

"I wanted to do something to support Camp Ta-Kum-Ta, but at first I didn't know what I could do to help. Eventually I realized that I'm a part of a very active and caring dance community and with such a large group involved we were able to raise over \$1700, which will send one more child to camp next year."

Laddison approached other local dancers and dance instructors with the idea of putting on a showcase demonstrating their favorite dances as the kickoff event for National Ballroom Dance Week. More than 30 people volunteered to perform in the show, with many others offering to work behind the scenes. National Ballroom Dance Week has been in existence since 1989, and is being celebrated across the nation, and in

Vermont, from Friday, Sept. 17 through Sunday, September 26, with events ranging from inexpensive or free dances through major events like the Partner Dance Showcase Fundraiser for Camp Ta-Kum-Ta.

During the showcase, Doug and Noemi Currier of Burlington performed their favorite dance, Argentine Tango.

“It was delightful to dance for that audience,” said Doug Currier. “Many were dancers, but many weren’t, and it was great to be able to show them what we do, and what they could do with a little practice. We’ve been dancing for a couple of years, and take lessons regularly, so we are the definition of amateur dancers. If we can learn to dance well in front of an audience, everyone can learn to dance in whatever social circle they choose. The dance showcase was a great sampler of the variety and styles of dancing done locally.”

Brenda Bean of Montpelier has been dancing for about a year, and says that the dance showcase was a great service not only for Camp Ta-Kum-Ta, but the dance community as well.

“The showcase was a great service to the kids who attend the camp, but it was also a great way for children around the area to find out about ballroom dancing,” she said.

Several students from the Pine Ridge School attended the showcase to learn more about ballroom dancing, and to support one of their teachers, Shannon Dixon-Yandow of Colchester.

Dixon-Yandow performed in the group waltz routine with her husband Michael Yandow even though they have been taking lessons for only eight months. “We wanted to support Camp Ta-Kum-Ta, and we knew that with practice we could perform well,” she said.

Al and Alice Maynard of Underhill have been dancing for four months, but were surprised by the variety of dance available in the local area. Mr. Maynard said, “I was not aware that this area has active communities of swing dancers, salsa dancers, argentine tango dancers, and ballroom dancers. I was impressed at the variety, and skill of the local dancers! It was really nice to see all of them come together to support such a good cause,” he said.

Donovan Currier, 14, of Burlington, agreed.

“My parents are both dancers, so I’ve been around dancers a lot for the past several years. I thought this event in particular was great because it brought together different styles of dance and that was very interesting to see,” he said.

Alice Maynard was also impressed with the age range of dancers in the showcase. “There were people as young as the two young teenagers in the salsa group routine all

the way up to people in their 60s, and they all looked great. Even those people who had only been dancing for a few months did really well, and it gave a beginner like myself hope that one day I'll dance that well," she said.

Mr. Maynard also found it interesting to watch those people who stayed after the performances for the waltz lesson and the open dancing. "It was nice to see all those people who looked like they were trying dancing for the first time staying out on the dance floor."

Noyes (from Camp Ta-Kum-Ta) and his wife Doreen were two of the people who stayed after the performances to begin learning to dance. He said, "Our second child just left for college and it was great for my wife and I to see that there are so many people dancing locally all the time, and that so many people dance for their own pleasure. This dance showcase has certainly raised my interest in learning to dance!"

Noyes said he was pleased with the first Partner Dance Showcase, "This was a fine start, and I'm sure it will get better each year."

Bean agreed, "This was a wonderful first-time event that will grow a lot over the next few years."

The second annual Camp Ta-Kum-Ta Dance Showcase is tentatively scheduled for Friday, Sept. 16, 2005, the first day of next year's National Ballroom Dance Week.

Further details about the Partner Dance Showcase, or National Ballroom Dance Week can be found at [www.firststepdance.com/news/takumta.php](http://www.firststepdance.com/news/takumta.php), or by calling Kevin Laddison at 802-598-6757.