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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Third annual Dancing with the Martin Stars triples funds raised to benefit women and newborns in Martin County

Stuart, Fla. – On Saturday, Sept. 28, a sold out crowd at the historic Lyric Theatre in downtown Stuart was wowed by flashy costumes and fancy footwork as local notables participated in the 3rd annual *Dancing with the Martin Stars* event hosted by the Martin County Healthy Start Coalition. This year’s event nearly tripled the funds raised last year, with a remarkable amount of more than \$132,000.

Local “stars” that took the stage this year were: Rosalind Neilen, owner of Rosalind’s Fitness Studios; Leslie Haviland, Associate Director of Student Services at Keiser University; community volunteer Eileen Morris; Wendy Hudson, representing Seacoast National Bank; Ken Norman, shareholder at McCarthy, Summers, Bobko, Wood, Norman, Bass & Melby; Patrick Murray, Extended Day Coordinator for the Martin County School District; Michael Flough of Michael Flough, Landscape Architect P.L.; and Chad Hastings, attorney with Lesser, Lesser, Landy & Smith.

Each participant was partnered with a local professional dancer who volunteered their time to teach the choreography and practice with their respective partners. Dances ranged in style from the samba to the fox trot to the cha cha.

Professional dancers included: Kevin Marone and Kristin Vennos of Rio Crystal Ballroom; Travis Scott, Lukas Klotzsche and Valorie Pari of Fred Astaire Dance Studio; Craig Galvin of Dance Studio; and independent professional dancers Thany Lim and Michelle DeRosa.

Judges for the event were professional dancers Elena Simonova and Joe Wynes, and StarStruck Performing Arts & Theatre founders, Jennifer and Peter Jones.

In addition to working on their dance moves during the last five months, celebrity dancers dedicated much of their time to reaching, and in many cases surpassing their fundraising goals. Many of the star dancers involved this year held a variety of creating fundraising events and parties to gain support from the community and raise funds for the Healthy Start Coalition.

“This year’s event has been extraordinary,” said Scott Berry, executive director of the Martin County Healthy Start Coalition. “We had an outstanding group of dancers this year who raised the bar in terms of talent and fundraising acumen,” Berry added.

The grand prize winner for the event was Wendy Hudson and her partner, Lukas Klotzsche who received the highest overall score by combining their dance score with the total funds raised by Ms. Hudson. Wendy and Lukas glided gracefully across the stage during their rendition of the fox trot. The pair earned a high score of 38 out of 40 and Mrs. Hudson raised nearly \$36,000.

“I am grateful to have had the support of my family, friends and community during my Dancing with the Martin Stars journey,” said Hudson. “It was hard work, but I’m so happy to have been a part of it and raise funds for mothers and newborns who need it most throughout my community.”

Ken Norman and his partner Kristin Vennos mesmerized the judges and crowd with their polished version of the rumba and the pair earned the highest overall dance score of the evening with a 39 out of 40.

One hundred percent of the funds raised through Dancing with the Martin Stars are used to pay for services and programs offered by the Martin County Healthy Start Coalition such as prenatal care, ultrasounds, lab testing and providing high-risk mothers with the specialized care they need.

Fundraising totals

Wendy Hudson - \$35,954

Eileen Morris - \$25,972

Ken Norman - \$15,963

Patrick Murray - \$14,886

Chad Hastings - \$11,408

Leslie Haviland - \$11,173

Rosalind Neilen - \$9,774

Michael Flaugh - \$7,082

About Martin County Healthy Start Coalition

Martin County Healthy Start Coalition is a community-based 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization that offers support and education to pregnant women and infants. Prenatal and infant health screenings, childbirth education, counseling services, and parenting education classes are available to families to ensure that all babies are born healthy. All information provided to Healthy Start is kept confidential. Eligibility for services is based on the presence of risk to the health of the mother or infant, not on income level.

Connect with Martin County Healthy Start on Facebook at www.facebook.com/MCHealthyStart. For more information, call 772-463-2888 or visit <http://www.mchealthystart.org>.

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Suggested Photo Caption: 2013 Dancing with the Martin Stars winners, Wendy Hudson and Lukas Klotzsche, celebrate their success.