COMMUNITY, GENERAL

Stars come out on Sept. 15

by Sharon Sullivan Moab Sun News
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Twice a week for the past couple of months, Moab “star” Aaron Aboites and dance “instructor” Cali Bulmash have been practicing their steps together at the Moab Arts and Recreation Center. They’re one of nine pairs competing in “Dancing with the Moab Stars,” a Moab Valley Multicultural Center fundraiser based on the television show “Dancing with the Stars.”
Nine couples will compete for first, second and third places, plus best costume and people’s choice awards. Aboites, a 22-year-old Moab Coffee Roasters barista and Young Life leader, said he is both excited and nervous about his upcoming performance, on Friday, Sept. 15, at 7 p.m. at the Grand County High School auditorium, 608 S. 400 East.

“There’s going to be a lot of people there,” he said. “They put on a good show.”

This will be the fourth annual event – tickets to the three previous years’ show sold out.

Aboites and Bulmash chose the song “Despacito” by Luis Fonsi, which Bulmash is choreographing for the three-and-a-half minute performance. Couples also create their own costumes – with the help of WabiSabi Thrift Store, which donates clothing, if needed.

While judges decide who wins first, second, third, and best costume – the people’s choice award is determined by which pair receives the “loudest screams, applause and whistles,” MVMC programs coordinator Zaida Agreda Winn said.

An applause meter will help judges determine who gets the loudest response, she said. When asked if he’d be inviting all his friends, Aboites laughed.

“I work with a lot of kids. They’re pretty excited about coming,” he said.

Aboites volunteers at the multicultural center with the Amiguitos Club – a mentoring program in which young people, typically high school students, pair up with elementary students once a week. The club meets as a group to work on homework and other projects, plus play, and share a meal together.

“Each kid has an ‘amigo’ – a role model,” Winn said. “Aaron’s a great helper in that program. Now he’s volunteering as a star.”
Aboites said the multicultural center’s executive director Rhiana Medina had been asking him to perform for the past two years.

“I’ve been out of town on those dates, but this time I was available and I wanted to help,” he said.

Other “Stars” in this year’s program include Canyonlands Natural History Association operations manager Sam Wainer; Grand County High School drama teacher Marilee Francis; Moab Brewery employee Brad Maxwell; Community Rebuilds Executive Director and founder Emily Niehaus; Helen M. Knight Elementary fifth-grade teacher Jill Tatton; Dead Horse Point State Park maintenance supervisor Jim Nelson; Moab Recreation and Aquatic Center Director Terry Lewis; and Kelly Vagts, a licensed child therapist.

Dancing with the Moab Stars is a major fundraiser for the multicultural center. Last year, the event raised nearly $10,000 for the nonprofit. Winn said they hope to raise at least that much again this year. The money goes to fund various programs: crisis resource and advocacy, education and outreach, interpretation and translation, language and life skills, and cultural education and outreach.

In addition to the competition, there will be a noncompetitive dance “expo” performance, plus a flag processional representing 30 different nations.

“It is to show the diversity of our community,” Winn said.

Watch Moab’s “celebrities” dance for multicultural center

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When: Friday, Sept. 15, at 7 p.m. Doors open 6:30 p.m.

Where: Grand County High School auditorium, 608 S. 400 East
Cost: $13 advance; $15 at the door. Tickets available at Back of Beyond Books and Moab Valley Multicultural Center, 156 N. 100 West

Information: moabmc.org/event-view/dancing-with-the-moab-stars/

For more information, go to: moabmc.org/event-view/dancing-with-the-moab-stars/.