

Team 1

# Pat Barron



## *I'm dancing because...*

its fun and Dancing with the Athens Stars serves a great cause.

I worked in the legal field for over 42 years as a lawyer and judge protecting families impacted by domestic violence. I understand the important work at Project Safe and its value to our community. This is my way of helping to continue their important work.

## *About me:*

A native of Atlanta, Georgia, Pat has called Athens home for 33 years. She is a graduate of Mercer University in Macon, Georgia and Georgetown University Law Center in Washington, D.C. Pat worked as an attorney with Georgia Legal Services for 20 years, as a clinical law professor at UGA for 2 years and recently retired as the Chief Magistrate Court Judge of Athens-Clarke County after 20 years of service.

She has participated in many community organizations, including serving as Chairman of the Board of Directors of Athens Technical College and as Chairman of the Governance Board of the Athens Community Career Academy.

Pat was the recipient of the 2013 ATHENA Award presented by the Athens Chamber of Commerce and the 2015 Georgia Magistrate Court Judge of the Year presented by the Georgia Council of Magistrate Court Judges.

She is the author of a children's book on the legal system in Athens-Clarke County and has worked with many organizations in our community serving youth, including the Athens Tutorial Program and the Athens Rotary Club. She is an active member of Greater Bethel A.M.E. Church in Athens.

Team 1

# Geoff Newell



*Instructor*



## *About me:*

Geoff has been instructing dancers all over the United States since 2013. In college, he served as the President of the University of Georgia Ballroom Dance Club and the Vice President for the Ballroom Performance Group. He became a full time instructor in 2018 and teaches the full range of American Social Dance Styles, with emphasis in Lindy Hop, West Coast Swing, and the American Ballroom styles.

Geoff has competed and won at several dance events, including the Heritage Dancesport Classic, Grand Nationals Dance Championships, The Atlanta Open, Swing Into Spring, and the Southern Swing Challenge. He holds a first place trophy from a regional Dancing With The Stars competition.

As a teacher, Geoff focuses on building a relationship with the music and culture associated that gave birth to each style of dance, and helping each student get the most out of their own abilities. He firmly believes that anyone with a heartbeat can find a home on the dancefloor. After all, even the best dancers only move one step at a time.

Team 2

## *Denise Spangler*

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*I'm dancing  
because...*

Project Safe is a tremendous resource in our community, and I hope my participation in DWAS raises awareness of the organization as well as motivating people to support Project Safe.

### *About me:*

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Denise Spangler is Dean of the Mary Frances Early College of Education at the University of Georgia. She previously served on the Clarke County School District Board of Education for 12 years, serving 2 terms as vice president of the board. She is a member of the Board of Directors for Family Connection/Communities in Schools and for Horizons Atlanta. She has completed all 13 AthHalf half marathon races, several other half marathons, and 4 marathons. She is married to Mark Huber and lives in Athens.

### What interested you in participating in DWAS?

I've attended many times in the past and always admired the courage of the celebrity dancers.

### What are you hoping to gain from participating in Dancing with the Athens Stars?

I've never danced before, so I'm looking forward to learning a few steps that I can use at weddings in the future.



## *Instructor*



Team 2

# *Bob Schaaf*

## *About me:*

Bob Schaaf is a member of DanceFX's Contact Dance Company. He received his B.A. and J.D. from the University of Georgia in 2017 and 2020.

From 2015 to 2020, he was a member of the university's Ballroom Performance Group where he performed, taught, and choreographed ballroom and social dances. He had the opportunity to attend the Adult Ballroom Camp at Brigham Young University and compete in the Atlanta Open.

Bob is an attorney who serves as the judicial law clerk for a federal court in Atlanta.



Team 3

*Anita Thompson*



*I'm dancing  
because...*

I have friends who  
are survivors of  
domestic violence.

They are  
champions!

Now, I want to be  
a champion for  
them!

### *About me:*

Dr. Anita Winfrey Thompson is a native Athenian. She resides in Athens, GA. Dr. Thompson held the title of Ms. Exquisite Full-Figured USA 2020 and Ms. Exquisite Full-Figured Georgia 2019. She also served as Miss Paine College from 1997-1998. And she was voted "Miss Cedar Shoals High School" during her senior year of high school.

Dr. Thompson is a full-time instructor at Athens Technical College and a part-time instructor for the University of Georgia. She earned her B.A. in sociology at Paine College and then went on to obtain her M.A. and Ph.D. in sociology from the University of Georgia. She also is a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.

She enjoys spending time with family and friends and traveling when she can. She has a wonderful son, sweet parents, and many other loving family and friends. Dr. Thompson also enjoys doing community work and taking walks with family. Autumn is her favorite season of all!

Team 3

# Joshua Truitt



*Instructor*



## *About me:*

Joshua Truitt a 6th grade science teacher and Stem Advocate at Hilsman Middle School here in Athens. He has been dancing since he was 10 years old, and this will be his 8th year as a member of the Dancefx Adult Dance Company. This will be his second time performing as a dancer in Dancing with the Athens Stars.

His hobbies include dancing, photography, and traveling. Fun fact, Josh got to perform with Dancefx Adult company at the Tank Theater in New York this past summer! He is excited to take the stage again with Anita for DWAS 2023.



Team 4

*Matthew Lawing*

*I'm dancing  
because...*

All people deserve to live a life free of the fear of abuse. Project Safe helps people leave abusive situations and live with less fear.

I can think of nothing better than to raise money for an organization like Project Safe that helps those in need in our community.

*About me:*

Matthew Lawing grew up in Alexis, North Carolina and studied music education at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. In 2007 he moved to Athens with his wife, Sarah, for her to attend graduate school at UGA. He became a teacher at Colham Ferry Elementary school, where he has been teaching music to students in grade kindergarten through 5th grades ever since. He lives in Watkinsville with his wife and two daughters. Matthew loves live music, hiking, and traveling. He is so excited to be dancing with his dance pro Natalie Cox and more importantly raising money for a wonderful organization like Project Safe.

What interested you in participating in Dancing with the Athens Stars?

My wife and daughters have been part of Dancefx for many years. I have been to many many dance recitals and have seen how much confidence and happiness dance has given my family. My wife and I started taking salsa class with Natalie Cox, and I had the best time challenging myself with something new. Now I am able to continue challenging myself while raising money for an organization that provides support to individuals here in Athens.

Team 4

## Natalie Cox

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*Instructor*



### *About me:*

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Natalie Cox is a double dawg that received her A.B. and J.D. from the University of Georgia. She is currently an Associate Director for Legal Affairs, co-director of the University of Georgia Ballroom Performance Group, and instructor at the UGA Department of Dance for Ballroom Foundations. Natalie trained at the University of Georgia with Dr. Mark Wheeler and spends her free time traveling and taking teacher workshops and classes at ballroom and salsa camps across the US. When not at the University, you can find Natalie at Dancefx Athens teaching and dancing with CONTACT Dance Company and Revolution Salsa Company.



Team 5

*Joe Wyrick*



*I'm dancing  
because...*

My daughter Carly is a performer in theater, music, dance and aerial arts (trapeze and fabrics) and she has inspired me to and dared me to try some of the movement arts. I have thoroughly enjoyed my time with aerial trapeze, meeting new friends and performing, and I look forward to doing the same with DWAS.

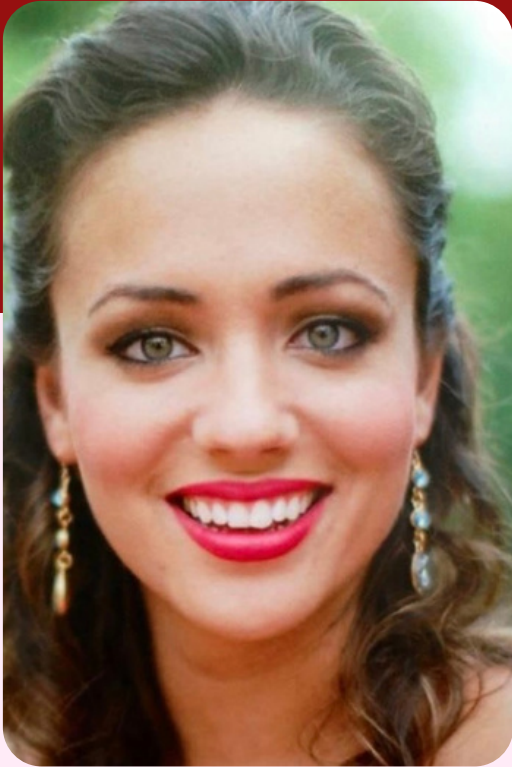
*About me:*

Joe is married to Jennifer Wyrick and the father of two children, Dylan and Carly. Joe and Jennifer are both originally from Chickamauga, GA and started dating while in high school. They have lived in Athens for over 25 years since graduating from UGA. Joe has been in the Financial Services industry for over 25 years and is the Branch Manager of Robins Financial Credit Union in Athens and I'm a member of the Rotary Club of Athens.

He is a huge fan of many types of music and loves to play loud electric guitar. Joe sings in the choir at Athens First United Methodist Church. He also performs on the Trapeze bar at Canopy and assists with the outdoor Boot camp classes at the YMCA.

**What interested you in participating in DWAS?**

I am competing to help bring attention to the need for resources to help those who are victims of Domestic Violence. I hope to generate as many donations as possible.



## *Instructor*



Team 5

# *Kaitlin Butcher*

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## *About me:*

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Kaitlin is the youth program and company director at Dancefx. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Psychology from the University of Georgia with an emphasis on Human Anatomy and Physiology. She enjoys teaching master classes and setting competition choreography throughout the Southeast, and her choreography has been recognized and awarded on a regional and national level. She is a guest tour judge for Open Call Competition and guest teacher for the University of Georgia's Dance Department.

Kaitlin loves being involved in the Athens community and has worked and choreographed for a number of local events and organizations including the wonderful Project Safe's Dancing With the Athens Stars.



*I'm dancing  
because...*

Project Safe is part of  
what makes Athens  
such a great  
community. Plus, I get  
to learn to tango.

Team 6

*Carol Myers*

### *About me:*

Carol Myers, eastside District 8 ACC Commissioner, is a longtime Athens resident since 1984. She raised two daughters here, Clare and Anne Saunders, and is now the proud grandmother of a 1, 2, and 3 year old – Amina, Dafne, and Taha. She entered local politics after a long career at Athens Technical College, teaching English to thousands of students and ending her career as Dean of General Education.

Her advocacy for a clean, renewable Athens and a bike-pedestrian friendly community plus her desire for the best possible lives for all Athenians motivates her work on a daily basis. For fun and to keep physically and mentally healthy, she is an avid bike rider; she even rode her bike across the country solo in 2015.

Team 6

# Fuad Elhage

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*Instructor*



## *About me:*

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Fuad Elhage is currently a Lecturer of Spanish for the Professions at the Franklin College of Arts and Sciences at University of Georgia.

He was raised speaking in Arabic, French, and Spanish as the context of home, school, and country shifted during different phases of his life and he now uses language and dance to keep the connections to his cultural affiliations alive. Dr. Elhage has a diverse professional background in computer science engineering, business administration, internet technology, and education and has taught for the Romance Languages department (French and Spanish) as well as for the World Language Education and TESOL program at UGA.

His research interests focus on global business relations, language acquisition, and cultural competence, as well as kinesthetic empathy through dance. The latter was subsequently developed into the "Diversity through Dance" workshop, an integral component of the Certificate in Diversity and Inclusion for the UGA Office of Institutional Diversity (this workshop is Elhage's favorite class of all to teach!) In his free time Elhage also enjoys yoga and dance—both as a student, a teacher, and a semi-professional performer.



Team 7

## Monique Sanders



### *I'm dancing because...*

The work that PS does is life changing. My parents have broken generational curses in the way of Domestic Violence so I know the impact programs like this has on generations.

When I think of Project Safe and their various resources in place to help victims recover, what resonates to me are the survivors who have been able to live prosperous lives and create more sustainable opportunities for their children. That's the gift that money can't buy!

### *About me:*

Monique Sanders received a Bachelor of Science in Biological Engineering from Louisiana State University and an MBA in Project Management Columbia Southern University. Monique has served as an engineer for a global healthcare organization for over 10 years. She is now sharing ideas and developing strategies to help other young innovators solve global problems through innovation. In addition to her extensive professional experience, Monique serves the Athens community as a member of the ACC Planning Commission, Project Safe Boards of Directions, Service to Youth and Communications Chair for Athens Chapter of the Links, and CEO & Founder of Get Stimulated, LLC. Her goal is to implement a legacy of excellence for the younger generation and technical skill development in Athens. Monique is currently the Technical Safety Engineer for Janssen Pharmaceuticals, Athens, GA.

Monique said, "I live by Mahatma Gandhi's quote, "The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others." Listen to your heart and follow your spirit's path of least resistance. It's in the authenticity that one finds their purpose. We are all blessed with unique gifts and talents, so use your to create a segue to enhance the quality of someone else's future."

Team 7

*Jeff Chen*

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*Instructor*



### *About me:*

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Jeff Chen first picked up salsa dancing over 10 years ago when he walked into a random class at a bar in downtown Athens. After becoming addicted, Jeff really enjoys sharing his experiences with others hoping to spread the fun and passion he's picked up along the way.

When he's not moonlighting as an instructor he works for the University of Georgia Carl Vinson Institute of Government doing IT.

Team 8

*Akash Shah*

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*I'm dancing  
because...*

Project Safe is an impactful nonprofit that has changed hundreds of lives.

I can't imagine an honor greater than working to further the cause of an organization that helps people stand tall during some of the most difficult periods of their life.

*About me:*

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Akash is currently a third-year law student who is wrapping up his tenth year in Athens. Prior to law school, Akash worked for a local startup on sales and marketing. After law school, he is heading to Washington, DC to work on corporate and regulatory law.

He's an avid crossfitter and a lover of all things local Athens, live music, and rainy days!

Team 8

*Izy Dobbins*

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*Instructor*



### *About me:*

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Izy Dobbins was born in Athens, GA, and grew up in Savannah, GA. She graduated from UGA in 2021 with a B.A. in Advertising, minors in Spanish and Environmental Health Science, and a certificate in Sustainability. Since then she's enjoyed post-grad life in Athens, working as the Marketing Manager of a local small business, Southland Organics, and continuing to dance, teach, and choreograph at DanceFX.

This is Izy's first year dancing for DWAS. She's thrilled to take the stage with fellow bulldawg Akash Shah and to support Project Safe and its mission to end domestic violence.



Team 9

## *Jane Greenway*

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### *I'm dancing because...*

Having 2 daughters and 2 granddaughters, keeping them safe and secure has always been my first priority.

I promise to pour my heart and soul into this event, raise an enormous amount of money for Project Safe, and ensure all women in our Classic City never feel alone.

### *About me:*

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Jane Greenway is a native of Nashville, Tennessee and has resided in the Athens area since 1976. An English major at the University of Georgia, Jane joined Coldwell Banker Upchurch Realty in 1987, and has served in every capacity of the Athens Area Association of Realtors for the past 20 years.

She is the proud Mom of Anna Layton Greenway and Kathleen Greenway Kelley, and is "GiGi" to 2 perfect granddaughters, Caroline Jane Kelley, and Collins Fitzgerald Kelley.

Team 9

*Mike Fulford*

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*Instructor*



### *About me:*

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Mike Fulford is the Assistant Dean for institutional effectiveness and strategic initiatives in the College of Pharmacy at UGA. When he's not effectively strategizing, Dr. Fulford serves as Co-Director of the UGA Ballroom Performance Group. He first began dancing because he needed PE credit as an undergraduate student at UGA. Like his BPG Co-Director and fellow DWAS instructor, Natalie Cox, Mike was mentored by the legendary Dr. Mark Wheeler, founder of the ballroom dance program at UGA.

Team 10

## Neal Priest

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### *I'm dancing because...*

As an ER doctor I saw the brutality of domestic violence, and I believe no one should live in fear or be belittled and controlled.

Project Safe provides safe spaces, counseling, legal assistance, and a safe way out to freedom from fear for families.

### *About me:*

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Neal Priest is a retired ER doctor who worked for 34 years at St. Mary's. He's happily retired and happily married to his brilliant wife Pat, whose many projects often wrangle him to take the stage as host, stepper, singer, and now dancer. He and Pat moved here from Los Angeles because of the university and the music scene.

Neal has had peak experiences singing with various great talents around town. He's a nut about the environment, plant-based eating, electric cars, and compassion.



## *Instructor*



Team 10

# *Viv Hamilton*

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## *About me:*

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Viv Hamilton is the Director of Chemistry, Manufacturing, and Controls at Aruna Bio, a biotech company here in Athens. Viv received her B.S. in Biochemistry and Molecular Biology from the University of Georgia in 2011. During her time at the university, Viv was a member of UGA's Ballroom Performance Group, and is currently a member of DanceFX's CONTACT Ballroom company and Revolution Salsa company.

When she's not dancing she loves to spend time at home with her husband, Adam, and their two Great Pyrenees, Marshall and Graham.