

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DC's Dancing Stars Gala Launch Party Kicks Off 2025 Season by Celebrating Dance, Community, and Giving Back

Launch event introduces 2025 competitors, recognizes beneficiaries, and energizes fundraising efforts for one of the region's most anticipated charity galas

Vienna, VA — September 15, 2025 — DC's Dancing Stars Gala ushered in its 2025 season on Thursday, September 11 with a lively Launch Party at the Tower Club in Vienna. Guests gathered to meet this year's competitors and beneficiaries and to experience an evening brimming with dance and anticipation for the main Gala, which will take place on **Saturday, October 25**, at the **Ritz-Carlton Pentagon City**.

The event highlighted the impressive roster of 2025 Gala participants. Celebrity dancers in attendance included Melanie Coburn, co-founder and Chief Relationship Officer of CADRE and former Washington Redskins NFL cheerleader, fundraising for the Jennifer Bush-Lawson Foundation (JBLF); Lieutenant Colonel Deborah L. Snyder, USA (Ret.), retired U.S. Army helicopter pilot and founder/CEO of Operation Renewed Hope Foundation; and Adriana Fonseca, MD, pediatric neuro-oncologist at Children's National Hospital, raising funds for the Raymond A. Wood Foundation.

Celebrities unable to attend but participating this year include Adam Tuss, Emmy- and Edward R. Murrow Award-winning journalist supporting the Virginia Breast Cancer Foundation, and Nikki Noya, Co-Host and Executive Producer of *The Jet Set*, fundraising for Dress for Success.

All corporate participants were present and introduced, including Olivier Lau, General Manager of The Ritz-Carlton, Washington, D.C., supporting Make-A-Wish Mid-Atlantic; Mike Brown, IT professional raising funds for Raymond A. Wood Foundation in honor of his great-niece; Mallory Dreyer, owner of Styles by Mal and lead singer of cover band Second Sun, supporting Operation Renewed Hope Foundation; Johnny Garstka, financial planner fundraising for Clemson University Foundation; Jenny Shtipelman, recognized as one of the Top 100 Bankers in the Greater DC area, supporting JBLF; and Alicia Barahona, entrepreneur, restaurateur, and Mid-Atlantic Blood Cancer United Board of Trustee member, advocating for Blood Cancer United in honor of her mother.

Even though she was unable to attend, guests acknowledged Barbara Hamilton, a long-time alumni dancer recognized for her many years of participation and for providing the event's signature flowers annually.

The celebration also highlighted the Gala's six 2025 beneficiary organizations: Raymond A. Wood Foundation, Blood Cancer United, Clemson University Foundation, Jennifer Bush-Lawson Foundation (JBLF), Make-A-Wish Mid-Atlantic, and Operation Renewed Hope Foundation. Many of whom personally thanked Maria Coakley David and Jim David, co-founders and co-chairs of the event, for their leadership and the vital fundraising the Gala has generated over the years.

Guests enjoyed an evening of cocktails, passed hors d'oeuvres, and a dessert bar, while a group dance lesson and additional dancing kept the energy high. DJ Louie Flaco provided the soundtrack for the night and the event was captured by Tre Lynn Photography.

“This has been one of the best experiences of my life,” said Alicia Barahona, a 2025 corporate participant dancing in honor of her mother. “This journey has been incredibly fulfilling, and I cannot thank you enough for giving me the chance to be part of it. By raising money in my mom’s honor for Blood Cancer United I’ve rediscovered my passion for dance. I plan to keep dancing and hope to return in future years as an alumni dancer because this experience fills my heart with so much joy. Knowing my fundraising efforts benefit my charity makes me feel like the best version of myself. Thank you for helping me come back to life!”

The DC’s Dancing Stars Gala continues to build momentum toward its main event. Supporters can follow updates and contribute at www.dcsdancingstarsgala.com or on social media using **#DCsDancingStarsGala #DancingStars #DonateToVote**.

About DC’s Dancing Stars Gala

DC’s Dancing Stars Gala brings together community leaders, local celebrities, and corporate participants to raise funds for local and national charities, having donated **\$2,106,700** over the last seven events. Inspired by the television show *Dancing with the Stars*, competitors perform polished choreographed routines with professional partners for a panel of celebrity judges and a live audience. The Gala includes a VIP cocktail reception, gourmet dinner, dance competition and silent auction and is an evening alive with energy, elegance, and the joy of giving back that you don’t want to miss!

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