



Name: Jen Harden

Dance Company: The Canadian School of Ballet

Tell us about your company: The Canadian School of Ballet (CSB) has been teaching ballet and dance for over 75 years and is home to Kelowna's annual Nutcracker performance. CSB teaches a wide variety of classes in Ballet, Tap, Jazz, Contemporary, Hip Hop and Acro to students aged 3-18. Students are able to take Royal Academy of Dance (RAD) Ballet exams, and dance competitively with the performance groups Company B and Junior B. I danced for 16 years at the studio and have been teaching Tap and Jazz for 5 years.

What years have you participated as a professional instructor? 2018, 2019, 2020

How did you first learn about Swinging with the Stars? I used to dance with CSB's Company B performance group and performed at SWTS for several years growing up.

Why did you agree to teach our local celebrities their dances? Seeing the event as a student, I loved the energy that was in the ballroom and how the community came together for COHA. My grandpa went into hospice when I was a young girl and this was my opportunity to give back.

What was the funniest moment you had with one of our local celebrities? There are so many funny moments with the groups I have worked with, it's hard to pick one. But one that comes to mind is with my group November Project back in 2018. Desiree Bortolussi and I were the instructors and we wanted the guys to do a kip up (a type of break dancing move where you lay on your back and push your hands back to get onto your feet). It is a hard move, but we saw some interesting variations that had us all laughing!

What is it about Swinging with the Stars that makes it so special, or that sets it apart from other events? I think the fact that the event does not just happen on one night. The dancers and pros work for months learning a dance, as well as fundraising and seeing the progress and effort come together is really special. It's the mix of elegance, charity and dancing that makes it a special event.

How has Swinging with the Stars impacted your life? In Oct. 2019, my Grandma passed away and spent her last month in hospice. Having both my Grandma and Grandpa use this service really makes SWTS that much more special to me. It is a way that I can give back to COHA and thank the people who made this difficult time for my family an easier transition. Having that personal connection makes me appreciate the event on a whole different level.