

# Dancers step up for 'Dance Away Domestic Violence' party

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To gear up for line dancing, Linda Mines took the microphone and gave instructions: "Step, one, two, three, four! Walk back, one, two, three, four. Now to the side..."

Mines had the crowd, many in their purple "Dancing Squad" T-shirts, up on their feet on Martin Square in downtown Homewood Saturday, June 11. They kept time to the thumping beat provided by DJ 610 (Byron Love) as they moved their hips, waved their arms, clapped and followed the steps Mines taught them.

This was a special dance party, "Dancing Away Domestic Violence," hosted by Anew: Building Beyond Violence and Abuse. Organizers called the second annual fundraiser a success.

The event included Zumba dancing with Yvette Roberts. Dawn's Dancing Divas came out to get the line dancing started, and new this year was cardio-drumming with Marla Dillard-Lemon of Lemon Zone Nutrition who brought 75 buckets, pairs of drum sticks and exercise balls to get participants going to a new form of exercise.

Darryl Scott of Harvey was the only



Marilyn Thomas/H-F Chronicle

Darryl Scott and Yvette Roberts had a great time doing cardio-drumming at the "Dance Away Domestic Violence" June 11 fundraiser for Anew: Building Beyond Violence and Abuse. More than 80 people came out to line dance, do Zumba and cardio-drumming.

man line dancing. It didn't matter to him. "I just love dancing," he said. "I'm here for a good time!" He stayed for the full three hours, and partnered with Roberts for cardio-drumming.

Jennifer Gabrenya, executive director of Anew, said the first year the group

held the dance party it didn't go off as planned.

"We had a tornado that day, and so we had to reschedule it and we lost part of our crowd," she said. This year, despite the overcast sky, the party went off as planned. About 80 people were

registered, although walk-ins were welcome.

Dawn's Dancing Divas were recruited by Marydale Donald, a member of the Anew board of directors and the event organizer. Dawn Avery said her dancers go all over the South Suburbs.

"We love coming out and doing stuff like this," Avery said.

A line of chairs was set up for those who chose not to dance, or for those who needed a break. One dancer said she was trying to psych herself up because dancing on pavement is harder than dancing on a floor, and dancers had to watch out for the curbs.

Despite those impediments, everyone was enjoying the event. Carol Gsell, Anew associate director, was drumming away on the exercise ball.

"That was a lot of fun," she said afterward. "It really was a workout."

Anew had a host of sponsors that helped them put on the event: Jassac Charitable Foundations, Inc.; Serendipity Yoga; Asian Harbor; Oil of Joy Wellness & TC, LLC; The Saucy Crab; First Savings Bank of Hegewisch; Intoxicating Styles; Thomas Photographic; and Wendy Peyton (Sherden), as well as assistance from the Village of Homewood.

## D161 balanced budget outlook boosted by tax revenues

BY CAROLE SHARWARKO  
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Fran LaBella, associate superintendent of business operations at Flossmoor School District 161, gave board members a favorable preview of next year's \$33.9 million proposed 2022-23 budget.

During a detailed presentation at the May 31 meeting, LaBella said the budget is expected to be balanced, with expenditures outpacing revenues by only about \$172,000.

"To me that's flat, because I can close that with my eyes closed," LaBella said.

To illustrate the next fiscal year projections, LaBella went through the current year's revenues and expenditures.

She began with property tax revenues, which have contributed to a positive bottom line for the district's current budget.

"Local property taxes (came) in much higher this year than we had anticipated," LaBella said. "A huge part of that

is from prior collections for the current year. The second part of that is a lot less property tax refunds than we've seen in the last couple of years.

"The combination has been a good one. We're positive to budget almost \$1 million."

The district received about \$23,040,055 million in property taxes, \$913,681 more than what it had budgeted for this year. In the tentative budget for next year, property tax revenue is expected to remain about the same.

In other revenues, \$3.7 million is expected from the federal government in 2023, with more than \$900,000 coming from a federal COVID-related grant called the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) fund.

The ESSER grant is paid out over three years, dropping from the budget in 2025.

Board President Carolyn Griggs wondered whether the district could consider keeping the staff members hired with ESSER funds, which include three math

specialists and two social emotional learning specialists.

"What happens if we want to keep all those positions from ESSER?" she asked.

LaBella offered to compile a list of all ESSER-funded expenditures, to consider possibly finding room for them in the 2025 budget, when the grant expires.

"Those are the big decisions you're going to have to make," LaBella told the board in reference to the issue.

To pay staff salaries in 2023, the district has budgeted \$21.1 million, and another \$5.2 million is budgeted for employee benefits.

Other expenditures in the tentative budget include:

- \$6.5 million for purchased services. LaBella said the estimate reflects anticipated continuing increases in the consumer price index, inflating the price of certain goods. "We know we'll probably be paying a lot more for things like electricity, heat and everything else that is oil based," she said.

- \$2.5 million for supplies and materials.
- \$1.6 million in capital outlay, which relates to building costs, site improvement and construction. In the current year's budget, capital outlay funded a new pre-K playground at Flossmoor Hills Elementary School.
- \$3 million that LaBella said largely will fund bond interest payments and special education for children taught outside the district.
- \$248,000 in non-capital equipment.
- \$8,000 in termination benefits.

The board gave its tentative approval to the proposed budget at its June 13 meeting.

The finalized budget will be presented to the board in full detail at its August board meeting, when it will be up for consideration and a vote.

"This is your overall (look), based on major, macro assumptions," LaBella said. "My staff and I will now dive into the micro, line by line, person by person, detail by detail."

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