

# Artist for a Cause, of Palm City, brings dancers and audiences together for charity

**Frank Avilla**  
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PALM CITY — Terry Barber has always been passionate about using his musical talents to benefit his community. Having accomplished this through the years, he now concentrates on assisting other artists interested in sharing their talents in a similar way.

In 2009, Barber, an internationally renowned vocalist who has sung on some of the world's most prestigious stages, founded the Palm City-based, non-profit organization, Artists for a Cause (A4AC), which is currently in the middle of their seventh annual Dance for Food event series.

"I founded Artists For a Cause because, after losing my mother to cancer while she was in her 50's, I struggled to use my talent to fight cancer," said Barber. "I witnessed that visual and performing artists deserved an advocate in this type of work. Now we have nearly 1,000 registered artists in every discipline nationally, with a high concentration on the Treasure Coast."

Dance for Food, the popular "food

raiser," which brings dancers and audiences together to collect food for the hungry, showcases exceptional talent and provides quality entertainment in a variety of venues to help people throughout the region. Two upcoming events will take place: Nov. 15 at Martin County High School and Nov. 22 at The Kane Center in Stuart. Both events begin at 4 p.m. Two other area events took place last week on Nov. 7 at Duncan Theater, Lake Worth Campus and Nov. 8 at Ft. Pierce Magnet School for the Arts. The only admission fee to these events is one bag of unexpired, non-perishable goods.

Artistically directed by Anna Preston of Preston Contemporary Dance Theatre, the Dance for Food events assemble many of Florida's finest contemporary dancers to showcase their talents.

According to Barber, Preston helps select the participating dance companies, gifted students who are mentored and selects the appropriate pieces for the events. She also choreographs pieces for her own pro company to be involved in each show.

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Lorin Taylor dances in front of Alex Reffie, both of Palm City, with the Dance Academy of Stuart previous Artists for a Cause 'Dance for Food' performance. The annual event will be taking place Nov. 15 at Martin County High School and Nov. 22 at The Kane Center in Stuart.

File photo  
 Mitch Kloorfain  
 chief photographer

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"Thanks to the hard work of Artistic Director, Anna Preston, our seventh annual Dance for Food events promise to include moving performances and more companies throughout Florida than ever before," said Barber. "Building on the success of past events, this season's Dance for Food will entertain audiences while collecting food for those in need. Audiences will experience innovative, contemporary dances and pre-show entertainment by some of the most gifted young artists in our network. Come, be entertained and do your part to help end

hunger."

Nearly 100,000 people on the Treasure Coast don't know from where their next meal will come. About 16 percent of the residents across Martin, Indian River, St. Lucie, and Okeechobee counties, struggle with hunger, including nearly 35,000 children. Hunger impacts families and individuals, seniors, children, and people with disabilities. It affects the homeless as well as working families who were once stable but now need help to survive.

Since its inception, Dance for Food has collected more than 20,000 pounds of food – including 5,000 pounds during last year's

series. Local charities that will benefit from this year's series are CROS Ministries, Farmworker Coordinating Counsel, Treasure Coast Food Bank and Kane Center Emergency Pantry.

Dancers for the events are all registered with Artists for a Cause. Local participants include: Anna Preston, Preston Contemporary Dance Theatre, Treasure Coast; Alicia Chodera, Atlantic East Coast Dance Theatre, Stuart; Maria-Elena Marso, Florida Aerial Dance and Circus Arts, Stuart and Jupiter; and Jerlyn Scott, Sensational Pole Fitness, Jensen Beach.

Student Companies for the

upcoming events include Dance Academy of Stuart and Mo's Dance Works (Stuart). Both will participate in the Nov. 22 event.

All performances will also feature acclaimed professional dancers. The Dance for Food event held at Martin County High School will be produced and performed entirely by the Martin County A4AC Club.

In addition to his work with A4AC, Barber is active with the local arts council and many other area organizations that support arts opportunities across the Treasure Coast. Previously, A4AC received the "Community Partner

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of the Year" award from the Boys & Girls Clubs of Martin County.

"It is among our goals to level the playing field, in accordance with the principals of social justice, to make sure that arts education opportunities are available to all children," said Barber. "All of our programs use art as a catalyst to meet a critical need in our community. Some help artists to support other charities, but most produce results directly."

For those who cannot attend a Dance for Food event but would still like to donate nonperishable goods for struggling families, they can be dropped off at the A4AC office at 1211 Sunset Trail, Palm City.

"Our Dance for Food event is just one of the many ways we are able to fulfill our mission of creatively building better communities," added Barber. "This performance serves many special purposes. Among them are providing an accessible cultural experience, providing educational, professional, and collaborative opportunities for dancers, and gathering food for those in need."

Artists For a Cause creates professional and educational opportunities for visual and performing artists whenever their art is being used for community improvement, stimulating culture, while addressing the critical needs of communities. Some programs help artists and charities to get the most out of their collaboration, while most produce results directly, by feeding the poor, healing the sick, or solving other problems through unique artistic solutions. Additionally, Artists for a Cause never asks artist professionals in a struggling industry to donate or give away their livelihood. No program is merely about art for arts' sake – Artists for a Cause is about the arts as a solution.

"The work of our organization is not as plain and simple as many others out there, but the effect, the layers of good that we do are like an onion," said Barber. "There are the obvious outer layers, but as you keep peeling, one can see that there are so many ways that we can creatively build better communities. If you want a creative solution, ask an artist!"

"Most know and agree that the arts in and of itself is community improvement. A4AC doesn't stop there, as we are always leveraging art for the good of others. And, we never ask artists in a struggling industry to donate their livelihoods. Who does that serve, taking from one to give to another?"

To learn more about A4AC, visit [www.a4ac.org](http://www.a4ac.org), call 772-419-8778 or email [info@a4ac.org](mailto:info@a4ac.org). Registration is available for artists, charities, and volunteers on the website.