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Cape girl dances for a cure

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Isabella Shaw of West Yarmouth will perform in the "Dancing for a Cure" show this weekend.

Cape Cod Times/Jim Preston

By Robert Gold
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HYANNIS — Last year, Isabella Shaw had to skip the big dance.

Isabella, then 8, was too weak from chemotherapy to show her moves at her Hyannis studio's "Dancing for a Cure" event.

But leukemia couldn't hold her down for long.

Isabella will headline the third annual event, scheduled this weekend at Barnstable High School.

"It's amazing," said the event's founder, Susan Mendoza Friedman. "Everybody is inspired by her. Everybody."

At the Saturday show Isabella will talk about her cancer and why she dances. She'll perform both Saturday and Sunday.

The event raises money for Friends of the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, specifically set aside for ovarian and breast cancer research. More than \$10,000 has been raised so far this year, Friedman said.

About 80 dancers, ages 6 to 81, will perform to a medley of Christmas, Hanukkah and inspirational music, Friedman said.

"She (Isabella) closes the show with this special dance around her," said Friedman, the director of Dance Designs in Hyannis, which sponsors the fundraiser.

Isabella was 7 when she was diagnosed with leukemia in April 2007. She had no symptoms, but the disease was detected when doctors removed a lump on her forehead, said her mother, Ann Marie Shaw.

The chemotherapy sessions left Isabella weak, so she held off on dancing that summer. But by fall, she made it back on stage. Isabella, who took up dancing at age 4, strengthened her body at her Dance Design classes. She was back with her friends, having fun.

"It's great for her mentally and physically," Ann Marie said.

Isabella, who lives in West Yarmouth and attends fourth grade at St. Pius X School in South Yarmouth, showed off her pizzazz yesterday.

She broke into a spirited impromptu performance in the Times photo studio when talk turned to this weekend's show.

Moments later, she headed for Cape Cod Hospital for another round of chemotherapy.

Isabella has endured 20 months of weekly sessions, with five months remaining. "She's doing great and feeling great," her mother said.

Performances are Saturday at 7 p.m. and Sunday at 2 p.m. at the Knight Auditorium at Barnstable High. For more information, visit dancingforacure.net. Tickets, available at the door, are \$10 for adults and \$5 for children.

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