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Dance Parties Raise Money for Animals

Liz Peterson loves dance. And she loves animals. So it's not surprising that she combined her two passions to create something unique: [Dancing for Animals \(DFA\)](#). Now she is using DFA to benefit animals.

DFA hosts dance parties in Manhattan every Friday night at Dance Times Square, 156 West 44th Street, 3rd floor (between Broadway and Sixth Ave.). Those who come early can take an introductory class in a specific dance style from 9:00–9:30 p.m. At 9:30, general dancing begins, where you can dance the night away to music in a variety of styles — from Swing to Mambo to Foxtrot — all for \$10.00! Donations are very much appreciated.

"If the crowd is small, sometimes I give instruction for three hours — the best deal in town!" says Liz. In March, she combined the DFA dance with her own birthday celebration and that of Melanie Lapatin, a co-owner of Dance Times Square. "We had a great crowd that evening," she says, "and as a result, we're giving grants to [BARC Shelter](#) and [Slope Street Cats](#), two Brooklyn-based organizations," she says.



Liz Peterson and studio co-owner Tony Meridith dance up a storm at Liz's benefit birthday celebration in March.

How did DFA come about? "I realized that since people already want to dance, I had a unique source of funding that could be used for charitable purposes," explains Liz, a professional dancer and dance instructor, who launched DFA six months ago. Recognizing the hard work of so many existing animal welfare organizations — "those doing the day-to-day hands-on hard work of rescue, adoptions, spay/neuter, working with feral colonies, plus the numerous organizations endeavoring on behalf of animals through cruelty-free products, positive animal legislation, vegetarianism, fighting the fur trade, vivisection, puppy mills, factory farming, exotic animal/circus animal abuse, foie gras production, endangered species/environmental degradation, hunting/canned hunts, dog- and cock-fighting, and on and on...I didn't need to be one more organization fighting for the same dollars. My mission is to raise funds through dancing activities and give grants to animal welfare organizations." Liz says that she is starting out on a local level, but hopes to expand nationally, with people dancing and raising money all over the country.

Another of her goals is to develop a social studies curriculum for junior high and high school students that combines the study of community volunteerism and contributing to society with teachings about their relationship to animals in society. "The project for this study would be to organize and run a volunteer dance from start to finish and to donate the funds raised to a local animal welfare organization," she says.

Liz plans to expand the DFA web site to include information on all animal welfare issues, with links to organizations already working to make changes in many areas. The links will provide people with further informational sources and volunteer opportunities for causes they care about. And she wants to develop a lending library of videos for people who would like to see movies about animal issues that they can share with friends or screen with a group of people.

DFA Friday night dance parties are listed in the [events section](#) on the Mayor's Alliance for NYC's Animals web site. They also can be found, along with more information about Dancing for Animals, at www.DancingForAnimals.org.

Liz Peterson, founder and President of Dancing for Animals, Inc., is both an animal activist and a professional dancer/dance instructor. Having begun both as a teenager, her love of animals started at home with a bevy of animal family members and surrounding wildlife; her love of dance began with Fred Astaire and Tap. She has been teaching Ballroom and Latin partner dancing in the New York City area for 14 years, both as an independent teacher and at Stepping Out and DanceSport Studios. She holds a B.A. in Dance from the University of California, Irvine, and a M.A. in Arts Management from NYU. She shares her home with her husband and volunteer, Ken, and cats Desi B., Peeps, and Ellie.