No Dancer Fights Alone: How Movement, Community, and Hope Carry Families Through Cancer Transcript

(Transcripts are generated by AI and may contain errors)

Well, Doctor Karlfeldt I wanted to take you into an organization. That is. That's very important to me. I'm a board member of Dancer Against Cancer, and it's an organization that supports dancers that are going through cancer.

And the organization is donating money to these individuals so that it can make their journey so much easier. And it comes without any kind of expectations that you need to spend it on this or that.

You know, for instance, if an individual wants to go, you know, go to Disneyland or if they need to pay their grocery bills or they need money for next month's rent, you know, they can use the money whichever way that they want.

So, it is a phenomenal organization. And I just wanted you to kind of get able to step in and see how incredible it is. So enjoy. We are looking to make a difference in people's lives that have cancer.

So we really wanted to find a way to give back so they can stay strong and do what they love. So we definitely love the dark platform. To give tools that people need in order to be able to battle this dreadful disease is so important for me.

Dan says, you know the expression of life, and then to be able to give life to the people struggling with cancer, to me, is vital. Just seeing everyone come together, if we can make someone's life easier, just for a minute, then we'll do what we can every time here at Da is amazing.

You're truly in for a treat. I am going to be chatting a little bit with Noah Lands. He is the founder of Dancer Against Cancer and he. This is something that is so dear to his heart and dear to my heart, and that we can support these individuals that are out there on stage now giving their all.

And here, now all of a sudden they are in a hospital bed or going through surgery and maybe losing a limb and the importance for us to be there for them when they're going through a hard time the way that they've been, you know, there for us, you know, to to bring joy and appreciation and in our life.

So I hope you enjoy my conversation with Noah and then also with with Terry, who was also there, kind of right at the origin of Dancers Against Cancer.

And now obviously it's become this, this a phenomenal organization and started with very few people. And now we have Paula Abdul, you have Janet Jackson, you have Lisa minelli, people out there supporting and wanting to make sure that this community stay strong and supported.

So I hope you can appreciate these conversations. And obviously, if you're as passionate about it as I am, hoping you can be there supporting that community financially because these children and these individuals, they need it.

So enjoy. Well Noah Lands, this is an absolute pleasure to to get to chat with you. You started Dancers Against Cancer many years ago. And tell me a little bit about why this was so important to you.

Well, I did start Dancers of Cancer Dancers Against Cancer about ten years ago, and I think that the reason it was so important to me is because we had one of our employees that actually had brain cancer, and she was a very vibrant part of our team.

And then she passed away. And so I wanted to do something in her memory because it was very devastating to the whole team. So that's how we started it right there.

And what what do you feel? I mean, dance, I mean, you've been in the dance community for a long time and, you know, your own companies. You know you do.

So what how important is dance to you? And what do you feel that that gives to life sort of saying, well, dance movement. So of course movement is is essential in life.

And I think that that when you're facing any kind of, of turmoils in your life or a disease or anything, that dance just helps you bring out the inner joy that you feel inside.

So I think that's just that's just common to everybody. You know, even if you're dancing in the kitchen, it makes you happy. And I think that's what's important about dance and how it relates to the cancer and how it relates with our charity.

We wanted to bring joy back into the community. And that's what I love when we see Dancers Against Cancer. So you have dancers like you're saying, it's bringing joy and bringing expression and bring kind of self-empowerment.

And then when you think of cancer, you think of the opposite. So here you actually bringing that energy, you know, into something that is so devastating and that and that's what I keep saying.

I mean, these dancers are giving this their expression, their joy to us on stage, and they do it with such precision. And, and, you know, here the importance and of us to be there for them on their journey.

Yeah, absolutely. You know, I've had some I've gotten to know quite a few of our hope stories and gotten to really going through some of the, the journey with them.

And this is what helps them, you know, I mean, just just getting out to be able to move. You know, we had a really famous choreographer that went through a lot with cancer and that was what what was her recipe for making her happy for the day, even if she was dancing in her kitchen in the hospital anywhere.

It just brings them a little bit of joy into what otherwise is a really hard battle. Yeah, yeah. And I, I, I was just taking some notes on that. Our last gala, we had the hope stories and, and kind of the words that they were using in regards to, to dance while they were going through cancer and they were talking about dance or saying like fun, freedom, hope, family, you know, so they actually they looked at the dance community as, as their family, the connection, the passion, the creativity.

And these are the things that obviously, I mean, all these are expression of, of life and, and how important that expression is. Yes. You know, we, hear sometimes not the best part of the dance community.

But I've been in this dance community for 45 years, and I see the beauty in it. It's a beautiful community. It comes together. It helps us raise money.

To date, I think we've raised over $7 million. We've hoped we've helped over 300 hope stories and families. And so I couldn't do that by myself. I couldn't bring that much money into it.

I couldn't bring that much love into it. And that's where the dance community is really important, because they do come together. They recognize their brothers or sisters, and they all feel the love of dance.

And that that brings everybody together. As you saw at the gala, you know, people enjoy each other. It's a great it's a great thing for dancers to come together, either whether they're on the stage or they're in the audience.

They, you know, once you're a dancer, you're going to be an answer for life. I do believe that. And you see, you know, you know, if famous individuals are coming and they're recognizing the importance of of supporting this community.

I mean, like you had Janet Jackson, had Paula Abdul, you have Lysa minnelli. You you have, you know, these these, you know, big names. And they recognize that they themselves sometimes can be touched by this.

And they have had family and friends have been touched by cancer and how important it is to, to share, you know,

because, you know, you know, sometimes later on maybe you are the recipient, right?

Absolutely. We're really blessed that the that so many celebrities have embraced us. And and the reason why I think is because everybody is has a story about cancer, whether it's a brother or sister or mother and nephew and niece, a friend, you know, I think that that's what brings everybody together.

It's it's very easy to be able to recognize what we need in this community as far as with cancer and dancers, you know, we we do all kinds of dancers.

We do kids that are dancing, we do adult parents, we do choreographers. You know, we've had famous people. And when they're going through the battle, we just want to help them a little bit along the way.

And that's one of the things I think that I'm really proud of. With Dancers Against Cancer. We have very, very little of our money goes to, administration fees.

90%, $0.90 of every dollar goes back to individuals. And that's important because when they're battling cancer, we don't know what they're battling. We don't know if they need money for medicine.

Do they need money to go out to dinner on? Do they need money to take their child to Disneyland? And so I think that's really important. And that's one of the things that I really wanted to do with this charity was to see the money that comes in, goes back out.

It's not absorbed by everything else. That's, you know, that charities have to go through. I'm very lucky because I do own four companies and all the individuals in this company, they donate their time.

So at the gala, when you were there, 90% of the people they are working were all volunteers. So that leaves us so much more money to give. And I think that's that's really a beautiful thing.

And I'm really proud of my employees for that. That's really phenomenal. And yeah. And what what incredible event. And I think this last event raised like was a 760,000.

Yeah. On that event. And all that money is then going to go to these. You know we say hope stories. You know these individuals. And I love how you use the word hope.

You know because it is is bringing that energy is bringing hope to these individuals, you know, so that they can see beyond their diagnosis. Yeah, absolutely.

One of our hope stories a while back was a celebrity, who lent us her celebrities, Olivia Newton-John. And really, truly, she was one that really touched my heart.

And I loved her whole philosophy about cancer. You know, she's she's like, you know, we're going to use Western medicine, but we also need eastern medicine.

We need them to bring in. We donated money, money to her, a living Newton-John, Cancer Center in Australia, and some of the things she was doing, she's bringing dogs in to bringing artists in.

They're having music classes, dance classes, things that bring hope into people's lives. And at that time, they really do need it. I mean, they're they're facing something that, you know, is very difficult.

And so any kind of hope that we can bring them, I think is, is our duty to do. And what have you seen? I mean, because you, you give large checks to these individuals to, to help them on their journey.

I mean, can you tell me a little bit how how that has impacted some of these hope, hope stories? Oh, absolutely. You know, I just you know, we had we had one dance choreographer and she had this was her third bout with cancer.

And so, you know, when, when we sent the check, the husband sent me a text and said, you know, we're going to pay our electric bill this month. You know, he's like, everything's been going to the medicine.

And so I've been so worried about how we're going to pay our family bills. He's like, so this is going to take us 2 or 3 months through that cycle. One time we had a family, and unfortunately, the little boy that that had cancer passed away.

And so by the time the check got to the family, the little boy had already passed away from cancer. And the mom called and said, we want to return the check.

And I told her, no, don't return the check. The check was for him and it's for his memory. I said, take your family to Disneyland, do something in your son's memory, and make sure that you know every minute of that day that you're spending and you're doing it.

You're thinking about him because that's what the money sports for. Hope, no matter where the hope comes from or where it takes us, the hope is what will get us through life.

Yeah, I'm getting chills when you tell that story. I mean, that that's that's awesome. And and I and I know we are going to be collaborating a little bit of regards to bringing dance.

You're talking about Olivia Newton-John and using dance as, as medicine. And I'm excited how we can collaborate to to can bring being dance as a tool, a healing tool while an individual's going through cancer.

So that I'm really excited about that project that we're going to do together. Yeah, I'm very excited about that. That too. It's just another way that we can help give back to the community and bring dance into everybody's life.

And whether they were a dancer before they had cancer, they're going to be a dancer after they have cancer. Once they get this kind of a program going, it's just going to bring joy to them.

So I think that's really great and I'm excited to collaborate with you and thank you so much. Oh, it's absolutely my my joy and pleasure. Well. Well, Noah, this phenomenon, I'm so, so thrilled to get to be part of such a powerful organization.

And I hope that all the listeners, you know, that they are as touch as I am in regard to your mission and to kind of see the opportunity to help these individuals that that are going through such a difficult time.

So thank you so much, Noah. Okay. And thank you, doctor two, for being on our board. We appreciate you and all the advice you give us is just unmeasurable.

So thank you once again for your caring and for the fact that you give back to us with your knowledge. So thank you too. Well, Terry, it is such a phenomenal pressure to to have you your an icon in the dance world.

You're an author and you have gone through your own cancer journey. So thank you so much for for chatting with me a little today. Well, thank you for having me. I'm honored.

I'm really honored. So so talk to me a little bit about what dance means for you. Why is dance important to you? Well, ever since I was a kid, I don't know how, but because I wasn't in lessons or anything.

But dance always found me. And there seems to be some sort of purpose for that. I never really quite figured it out, but now that I'm older, I realized that it's kind of my what saves me.

It keeps me going. It makes me move. Especially with my journey with cancer. I've had cancer twice now, two different separate kinds of cancer. One when I was 38 and one a few years ago, 2018.

And so for me, it's just been something that helps me guide myself in a way and think of things that are positive.

And I met Rick years ago, Mr. Noah Lance, and he had a competition, a very small competition.

I had a very small dance studio years ago, and we met and got very close. And about 14 years ago, I think it was, we met for coffee over by his house, and he said he had this idea that he wanted to start this Dancers Against Cancer.

And I said, okay. And at that time I'd only had cancer once. And he goes, I want you to be the first ambassador. I said, no, I don't want to be the first ambassador.

Everyone knows I'm kind of an introvert. That has to be in the next reverted world. So he said, no, no, it needs to be you. And so there was a purpose for that.

There's always some kind of purpose that I had to dance. I met him, you know, I had cancer once, so I became this ambassador and it has grown so much.

We had 14 people, I think, when we started in a little room in a little hallway that we talked about cancer, and now it's huge, and we have all these stars coming out and all these prominent people and doctors and pharmaceutical companies and city of Hope and people like city of Hope.

And I just think it's so amazing how much it's grown. And being an ambassador was probably one of the best things I've ever done in my life, even though it forced me to get out of my comfort zone.

And then again in 2018, as I said, I got a different kind of cancer. And, I was also a recipient of Dancers Against Cancer giving me cash. And the way they do it is so purposeful to me because they don't donate it to other facilities or anything.

They actually give it to you and say, do what you want with it. So there are kids in our dance world that they just want to go to Disneyland, and that's what they get to do, you know?

And so for everybody, it's different. So it kind of came back full circle when they gave me that money. And since then, of course, you know, I have a book, I'm an author.

And when I was teaching dance, I had to teach through cancer. So I had to tell the kids how to fight. And keep in mind, with breast cancer especially, most of them are girls that I taught back at the time.

So I would have a whiteboard and every week I would put a lesson on it. And sometimes the lessons related cancer, sometimes they didn't. Sometimes I was just in a bad mood and didn't want to do a lesson.

And other times they were like, well, where's the lesson? You know? And I tried to correlate it not just with dance, but how dance really is life and that it correlates with life.

And everybody in the world can move. You don't have to be a dancer, but everybody should move. And you would be surprised. You know how good you feel even if you're sick, if you just moved for a second.

And so I had a couple lessons that were really important to me, especially going through cancer and teaching kids that they can make it through, or that their mom or their dad.

And one of them was lesson number 16. If you don't mind me telling you that, I would love to love to. The lesson was that you know you have a right to give up for a while, just not longer than you fight.

And that was something I said all the time when I was younger, like, okay, give up for a while. And I think people, as you know, doctor, I think people think they have to fight through it constantly.

And no, you can rest for a while. You can rest just not longer than you fight. And so I want people to know that whether it be cancer or not, right now we're talking about that.

But in life in general, give yourself a little bit of a rest time. And the other lesson that my kids taught me, actually, when I was very, very sick, you know, I could hear them downstairs playing and I'm like, I can't even get up.

And I thought, no, I got to get up. I got to make them laugh. And I danced down the stairs or something. And the other lesson was lesson number 15, which is don't forget to play.

So dance to me is playing. And if anyone hears that, just don't forget to play. Because when you play, I mean, I'm not a medical doctor, but it seems like the endorphins and everything else come up that make you feel better.

And so for me, the whole thing again became full circle. So that's kind of where I am with my journey. As a writer, as a choreographer, I've been really lucky.

And I think you make your own luck by who you meet, what you say. So that's kind of where I am. I hope it resonates with some people. And what is the name of your book for people?

That my book is a kind of a strange name. It's on Amazon. It's called lesson hashtag dot dot, dot because I would just make up the numbers to the lessons according to how I felt that day.

And now the kids, some of them have tattooed on their arm, some of them have them, you know, in their dorms at college. Some of them write them to me and send me pictures of them.

So it's really kind of cool. And I'm honored that I had promised the dancers I would write the book. I would, I promise them I only have like 11 lessons in there of 100 or whatever.

But, thank you for, you know, talking about the book because it means so much to me when someone says, I love lesson number eight, I love lesson number one.

So but yeah, I'm excited about it. Yeah. And it was such a you know, I felt so honored to get to meet, you know, some of your students, you know, professional dancers and, and and they talked I mean, their whole face desolate up, you know, talking about your lessons and how how important that was in your life and their life.

and that's the thing when you're navigating cancer is that, you know, to have that, that support of a community. And that's why I'm so honored myself to be part of on the board of Dancers Against Cancer.

And just because I feel that you, as dancer, as a community, give so much to the world. And then for us, you know, that are not dancers like myself. I wouldn't want to even show my steps.

I would look like Elaine and Seinfeld, you know, if I if I move about. But it's for us then to to be there and support you as a community when you are going through challenging time and give back love, you know all the love that you give us, you know, with, with the expression of art.

And so, so thank you so much, Terry, for everything that you, you've done and are doing and for the fight that you are bringing to the world. Thank you.

I'm so honored and I'm honored to be here, and I'm honored to be part of dancers at Kansas Cancer. I've been asked to be a lot of different things, but Dancers Against Cancer is the most important thing I've done.

So thank you, thank you.