

Public relations pro puts on her dancing shoes

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MATTHEWS - Angela Prince goes ballroom dancing five days a week. But no, she's not a professional.

The Matthews resident owns AF Prince Associates, a public relations and marketing firm with clients ranging from professional athletes to nonprofits.

But in her off time, Prince is at south Charlotte's Piper Glen Ballroom practicing the tango. Though she's passionate about her hobby, Prince said she'd never consider trying to make it as a professional dancer.

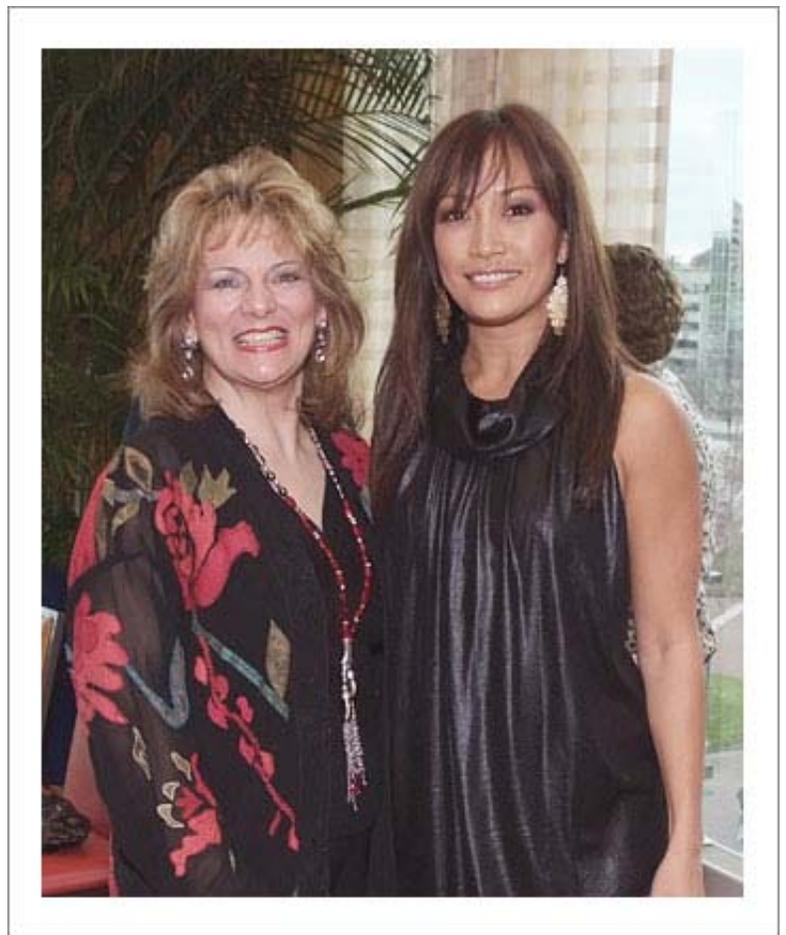
Since 2007 she's also been the volunteer director of public relations for USA Dance, Inc., the national governing body of DanceSport, an organization that promotes dancing as a sport and hosts competitions. USA Dance is a driving force in the push to make ballroom dancing an Olympic sport.

Prince's work with the Cape Coral, Fla.-based organization recently earned her its first USA Dance President's Award. Peter Pover, USA Dance president, and Carrie Ann Inaba, a judge on ABC's "Dancing With the Stars," presented the award to Prince at the 2009 National DanceSport Championships in Baltimore

Prince, who was at the championships to assist media, said she didn't know she was in the running for an award. In fact, she was sick on the evening of the awards ceremony and considered not going.

"(Pover) said he wanted me there to help. There's a video of me saying 'You tricked me' to him when I was called up for the award," she said.

The popularity of shows such as "Dancing With the Stars" and "So You Think You Can Dance" has pushed the athleticism of dancing to the forefront, Prince said. But USA Dance's efforts to make dancing an Olympic sport started at least 10 years ago, she said.



Angela Prince with Carrie Ann Inaba (right), celebrity judge on ABC-TV's "Dancing With The Stars." Photos courtesy of Angela Prince



Prince tangoes with Max Maleshko, a professional dancer at Charlotte's Piper Glen Ballroom, at the Heritage Classic DanceSport Championships in Asheville in March. The duo, who had never competed together before, placed fourth overall in the Closed Silver Championships.

"People say dancing? Olympics? Yeah," Prince said. "You have to stay fit. There's a lot of athletic training involved."

A hobby, a passion

Originally from Spartanburg, the former journalism teacher turned to ballroom dancing about nine years ago after dancing country-western styles for about five years. She enjoys the diversity she finds on the ballroom floor. She's danced in pro-am competitions, most recently with professional Max Maleshko of Piper Glen Ballroom, 6420-B5 Ray Road in Charlotte.

"Dancing brings together a lot of people who might not even mingle," she said. "But I'm a competitive person, and because I am, I like to push myself and beat the odds."

"We don't tell my age, but I'm not 20 anymore," she added.

Ballroom dancing is just one of Prince's hobbies. She also plays classical piano; she once turned down a college music scholarship. For 15 years she rode horses competitively – and still owns a 92-acre horse farm in Midland – and was once an avid fox hunter.

"I've just got to have fun," she said. "I don't have a single day that is the same."

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