

Lysacek's fans raise \$5,000 for memorial fund

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By HILARY DECENT For Sun-Times Media

Evan Lysacek might not have been such a big hit with the judges on last night's Dancing With The Stars, but he certainly was with Naperville supporters. A screening party at Raffi's on Fifth with his parents raised more than \$5,000 for the Stephanie Joseph Memorial Fund.

Guests included Stephanie's father, Joe Joseph; Lysacek's first skating coach, Candice Brown; his foot specialist, Dr. Robert Weil, and Mayor A. George Pradel. About 100 people watched on a giant screen as Lysacek was awarded his lowest score ever after dancing the samba with partner Anna Trebunskya. Earlier in the week, he had suffered a concussion after hitting his head on the floor during training.

"I don't know anything about dance. I thought he looked great, and I would have given him 10s," said Tanya Lysacek right after his performance. "I know this will make him try even harder next week."

Mayor Pradel said he was disappointed, but not with Evan.

"I don't know anything about dancing, but I thought his moves were excellent, especially after suffering an injury to his head," Pradel said. "I watch him every week. I think he was robbed. He's the greatest."

Don Lysacek said his son did not inherit his dancing prowess from him.

"Absolutely not," he said. "I don't dance — there's nothing like being humiliated in public! Evan has no dance background, but if he sees a challenge, he goes for it. He attacks it like his skating."

Despite the air of disappointment, the event was a huge success for the Stephanie Joseph Memorial Fund. Stephanie, Evan's friend and skating partner, died of cancer at the age of 21. Money is being raised in her name to help other young people achieve their dreams.

"I am very excited in two ways," Joe Joseph said. "Evan is progressing quite well, and it is a joy to watch him doing something other than ice skating and excelling. Two, all these people are supporting the Stephanie Joseph Memorial Fund and that's very exciting and heart warming."

Melanie Goldish is the chief executive of Supersibs!, a charity helping the siblings of those suffering from cancer.

"I wanted to support this wonderful fund and the lovely things the family are doing," she said.

Supersibs! previously presented Stephanie's older brother Tom with a trophy for his strength and courage.

The event included a silent auction of Evan Lysacek memorabilia, and two tickets to watch Dancing With The Stars live in L.A. fetched \$1,000.

For learn about the Stephanie Joseph Memorial Fund, visit www.stephaniejoseph.org.