This year, Dancing with the Moab Stars will look a little different. Instead of the classic event where prominent Moab figures are partnered with dance instructors to compete in a dance competition, the Moab Valley Multicultural Center, who puts on the event, will show a free film in Swanny Park as a “COVID friendly tribute.”
“Dancing with the Stars is typically one of our biggest fundraiser events,” said Liz Donkersloot, resource coordinator at the multicultural center. “But we’re offering this event free because we want to bring people together in a way that is safe, and in a way that will build community while still celebrating the diversity and differences that we have as a community.”

The multicultural center’s mission is to “promote intercultural understanding and appreciation,” according to their Facebook page.

This year’s event will kick off with a multicultural flag procession, with 28 countries represented. The flag procession, done in years past, is an emotional and touching part of the event, Donkersloot said, and a way to show off how diverse Moab is.

The film will show after the procession. It was created by Anthony Militano, a volunteer at the multicultural center with a background in cinematography and movie-making. He’s been tweaking the film for over a year. It will include interviews with past performers about why they participated and what the event means to them, clips from past winners, and interviews with staff members at the center.

“[Militano]’s been working on it for a long time ... It’s a lot of fun,” Donkersloot said.

Dancing with the Moab Stars wasn’t put on in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but in 2019, hundreds of people watched the dance competition live in the Grand County High School auditorium. Dancing pairs were Kyle Darn and Dianne Bates; Christina Sloan and Candace Ballard; Lianna Etchberger and Alfonso Toral; Rob Magleby and Cheri Major; Dr. Pablo Johnson and Erika Ring; Ruth Lowe and Jenna Whetzel; Jessie Sorenson and M’Kenna Sorenson; and Serah Mead and Didar Charles.

Dancers were judged on their dance, but also had the opportunity to win awards for best costume and production—Johnson and Ring won the competition with a boxing themed dance.

The multicultural center will still host their other fall fundraising event, the Day of the Dead Festival. The Day of the Dead holiday on November 1 and 2, or Día de los Muertos, is believed to be the time when spirits of loved ones who have passed away return to the earth to visit the living. The multicultural center’s celebration on October 31 will include decorated altars, Latin cuisine, and folk art.
The “Dancing with the Moab Stars” tribute will be on Thursday, September 23 at Swanny City Park from 7-8:30 p.m.

**What:** Dancing with the Moab Stars COVID-Friendly Tribute

**When:** Thursday, September 23 from 7 to 8:30 p.m.

**Where:** Swanny City Park (400 N. 100 West, Moab)