



Photo provided

John Smith and Just Make It Happen will celebrate the 10th anniversary of "Let's Dance" weekend with a CD release. This year's event is July 17 through 19.

'Let's Dance' to mark 10th anniversary

Release of a special new CD will highlight the 10th anniversary of the popular "Let's Dance" Big Band Weekend, July 17 through 19 in DeKalb.

On Saturday, July 18, DeKalb's own John Smith and the Shananigans Big Band will release "It's Saturday Night - Let's Dance." The CD was recorded live in May at a special event featuring local ballroom dancers.

"In honor of the 10th anniversary of Let's Dance Big Band Weekend, the band is dedicating this CD to dancers and anyone who aspires to build a personal healthy lifestyle through the natural phenomenon that is ballroom dance," Smith, Just Make It Happen president and leader of the Shananigans Big Band, said in a news release.

The CD includes swing, foxtrot, waltz, Latin dances such as salsa, Cha Cha, samba and mambo, as well as Big Band hits.

JMIH, producers of Let's Dance, invites everyone to participate in "Let's Dance" activities all weekend in the Duke Ellington Ballroom at Northern Illinois University's Holmes Student Center.

The main event is July 18. At 7:30 p.m., there will be a presentation by JMIH about the CD release, honoring partners and collaborators. At 7:55 p.m., there will be a patriotic

salute, and at 8 p.m., the Grand Ball performance begins with host band John Smith and the Shananigans Dance Band.

Selections from the new CD will be included throughout the evening. The CD will be available for purchase that night for \$15.

Let's Dance Big Band Weekend's schedule also includes guests bands. The Alicia Hamilton Orchestra will perform at 8 p.m. Friday, and the Dick Elliott Orchestra will perform at 10 a.m. Sunday.

Three levels of dance lessons are available Saturday morning. A shoe vendor and "Tips Only" Cabaret Dance happens from 2 to 4 p.m. Saturday, at which Zach Harris has agreed to 'sit-in' with the Shananigans Combo.

Three package deals are available for the event. Food orders are due Thursday, July 9. At-door sales open 30 minutes prior to any dance or instruction. Cash or check is accepted. DeKalb County residents can apply/receive a KishHealth System "Dancing for Health Scholarship" valued at \$10 for one-time use at any dance. Visit www.justmakeithappen-dekalb.com for event schedule, package details, registration and scholarship forms.

Smith said the idea for the CD began from guest requests for an

anniversary recording. Since JMIH has no assets or operational funds, it relies on grants or break-even community events. An anonymous donor came forward to produce the CD for dancers of all levels to use.

He said the CD is perfect for beginning-advanced classes and ballroom dancers can use the live recording to practice dancing skills.

"Area announcers like Mike Williamson, Denny Farrell and John Gillcrist plan to use the CD for their Big Band radio programming," Smith said in the release. "CD Bay and 65 worldwide stores plan to sell the CD. We also are offering non-profits and business partners the opportunity to earn [25 to 50] percent on sales. Contact me at john@justmakeithappen-dekalb.com for details," said Smith.

With the CD funded, JMIH can use the proceeds to benefit Let's Dance partner projects with schools, KishHealth, USA Dance clubs, and others to expand access to the benefits of ballroom dance in the community and country, Smith said.

"I am excited and amazed that the break-even business plan continues to resonate with social ballroom dancers," he said in the release. "JMIH's partners include NIU, musicians, and dancers. All are to be congratulated for the past 10 years."