

L Dimensions of i v i n g

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Still kickin’

Dancing With The Stars favorite calls on therapist to land him on his feet

By LISA MANCUSO

Physical therapist Cindy Prentiss was away in Florida for a few days of relaxation when she got the call that one of her patients was hurt and needed her. Although she tried to convince him to see one of the other very competent therapists in her practice, Physical Therapy & Beyond, located at 100 Landing Avenue in Smithtown, he wanted to see her. So she hopped on a plane and met him back in New York.

A practicing physical therapist for nearly 25 years, Ms. Prentiss is indeed dedicated to her patients and her profession but canceling vacation plans does seem a bit much...until you discover that the patient who needed her was Long Island’s own Ralph Macchio. Star of the hit 1980s movie *The Karate Kid*, Mr. Macchio is now more popular than ever as a contestant on the current season of “Dancing with the Stars” where he is dancing his way into the hearts of millions of fans every week.

It was while putting in long, grueling hours of practice for the show that Mr. Macchio, 49, injured himself over a week ago. While learning his latest dance moves, he ruptured a cyst behind his knee. Ms. Prentiss said the rupture caused the actor excruciating pain. “He was supposed to be practicing 40 hours a week, but he was only able to get in nine hours of practice last week,” she said. She was able to treat Mr. Macchio here in New York but then flew with him and his family back to California where the show is filmed to offer him on-going support.

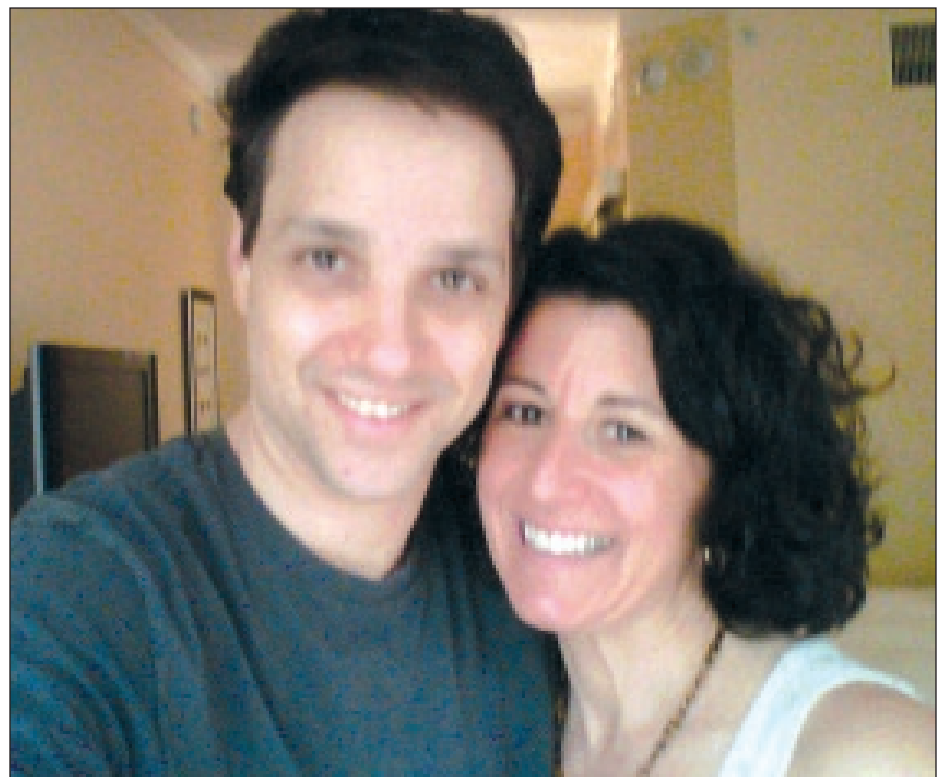
Ms. Prentiss said she has known the Macchio family for a number of years and has treated Mr. Macchio and other members of his family many times before. “He was referred to me by a local orthopedist,” she said. “He and his wife Phyllis have always been

great. They are the kindest, most unassuming family.” She said it is because of their kindness and the unpretentious ways of Mr. Macchio that she did not hesitate to help him when he needed her most. “They are constantly telling me how grateful they are but I feel honored to know them. They are such regular people.”

To show his thanks and gratitude, Mr. Macchio invited his favorite physical therapist to attend the taping of this week’s show. Ms. Prentiss brought along her 14-year-old daughter Kiana, an aspiring dancer. Both mother and daughter were thrilled to be in the audience. “We were in the family and friends VIP seats and it was amazing.” The studio stage, she said, was actually much smaller than it appears on television, and they got to see all of the dancers very up close and personal.

So far, Mr. Macchio is feeling much stronger this week, said Ms. Prentiss and she has been receiving updates via text messages from him and his wife. “He texted me Saturday night and said he is definitely feeling better and his wife texted that he’s in pain but getting better,” she said. “He had this past week to heal. It’s been rough but he’s getting there.” Ms. Prentiss said what he’s going through in real life is similar to the plot in *The Karate Kid*. “In the movie, he was injured and in so much pain, but he ended up winning,” she said and she is confident he will do the same on “Dancing with the Stars.” “He deserves it. He’s had a lot of fun doing it and he’s twice the age of most of the contestants. And the fans love him.”

In addition to the Smithtown office, Physical Therapy & Beyond has a location in East Setauket. Ms. Prentiss is also a licensed massage therapist and a woman’s health specialist. For more information about these and other services provided at both locations, visit www.cindiprentisspt.com or call 361-5111 for the Smithtown office and 941-3535 for the East Setauket location.



This season’s cast of *Dancing With The Stars* and reality show favorite Ralph Macchio and Smithtown therapist Cindy Prentiss.



At press time...
Mr. Macchio was eliminated
from *Dancing with the Stars*