

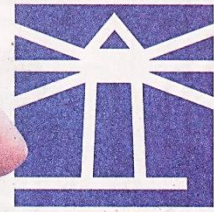
MOST VALUABLE PAIR

Clayton Kershaw wins the National League MVP award while the Angels' Mike Trout is AL pick. **SPORTS, 1C**



FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 2014

VENTURA COUNTY STAR



MORE U.S. TROOPS POSSIBLE IN FIGHT AGAINST ISLAMIC STATE MILITANTS: NATION, 8A

\$1.00

Quick Read



CLASSIC SHOW COMES TO KIDS

Ventura County Ballet Company performs excerpts from "The Nutcracker" for young cancer patients who can't see it otherwise.

LOCAL, 1B



PHOTOS BY JOSEPH A. GARCIA/THE STAR

Jasmine Quezada dances in the role of Clara during a presentation of excerpts from "The Nutcracker," by members of the Ventura County Ballet Company. The performance was given for children being treated at the Ventura County Medical Center Pediatric Oncology Clinic.

Dancing for smiles

Young oncology patients see part of 'The Nutcracker' ballet

By Anne Kallas
Special to The Star

Four-year-old Zelaya Guevara curled tiredly in her mother's lap as they waited for Ventura County Ballet Company's performance of excerpts from "The Nutcracker" at the Ventura County Medical Center Pediatric Oncology Clinic.

But as the eight young ballerinas started performing the beloved roles

of the dance Wednesday afternoon, the girl seemed to regain her strength, sitting up and smiling behind the surgical mask she is forced to wear to ward off infections.

Her mother, Charlie Guevara, explained that they had been in the hospital the night before and were both exhausted. But Zelaya loves ballet, so they decided to attend

See **BALLET, 2B**



Zelaya Guevara (left) meets some cast members from "The Nutcracker." Her mother said Zelaya loves ballet, so they decided to attend the performance.

BALLET

from 1B

the performance because the girl isn't allowed to be around large groups.

Before narrating the scenes the troupe presented, Kathleen Noblin, executive director of the ballet company, said she has a soft spot for children who are sick.

"I used to be an intensive-care pediatric nurse years ago," she said.

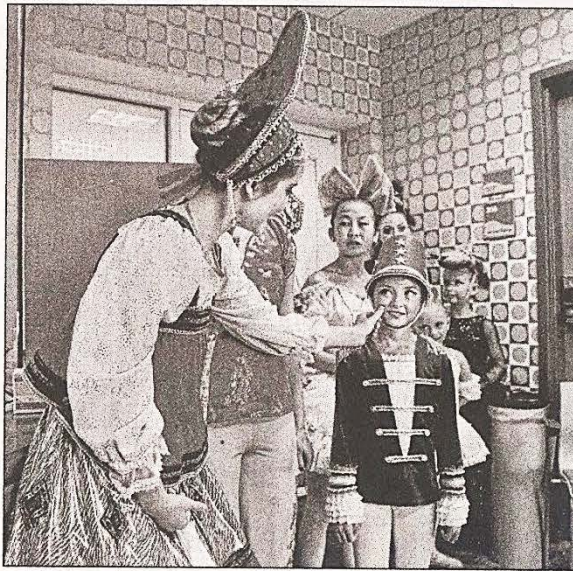
Dr. Francisco Bracho, director of the clinic, translated Noblin's commentary into Spanish. He said such events help families who are dealing with serious illness.

"They bring a nice bit of joy to these families. We always appreciate the community support. We like to be part of the community," said Bracho, a pediatric oncology hematologist. He said the children undergoing treatment for cancers of the blood have a list of prohibitions for their health during the holidays.

Among the banned things are live Christmas trees.

"The families have to adapt. There is limited travel and they shouldn't go to large public gatherings," Bracho said. "They can't sit on Santa's lap."

The ballerinas performing on the carpeted floor included Jazmine Quezada, 14, of Oxnard, portraying Clara; and Anna Miller, 17, dancing the role of the evil Rat Queen. Tia Johnson, 17, opened the performance by portraying a doll. Kira



Madeleine Riddle (left) gets cast member Lilee Tillery (right) ready for a presentation of excerpts from "The Nutcracker."

JOSEPH A. GARCIA/
THE STAR

cancer, and she's a survivor. (Jazmine) was so proud she could be doing something."

Zelaya was thrilled to have her picture taken with the young dancers, although because of her child's illness, her mom had to turn down an offer of free tickets for the upcoming performance of the ballet, which will include a 52-piece orchestra from Ventura College.

On the Net:

<http://venturacountyballet.com>

Tebbe, 16, was "Chinese candy." Lily Farr, 16, and Madeleine Riddle, 17, were Russians. A trio of younger girls danced the roles of all of the ballet's principal characters as "puppets." Hailey Hall, 7, was the Clara puppet, while Sarah Kish, 9, was the Rat Queen puppet and Lilee Tillery, 9, was the Nutcracker puppet.

Rebecca Quezada, mother of Jazmine, said her daughter was excited about dancing for the young patients, many of whom were only able to watch a brief portion of the performance before heading off to their appointments.

"I am so proud of her," Quezada said. "Her aunt was diagnosed with