

Chefs whip up tasty tidbits to prevent birth defects

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The March of Dimes 2005 Signature Chefs Gala took place at Avalon Manor in Hobart. Once again, the annual event was a lovely success with more than 500 guests in attendance.

The "best of the best" chefs of Northwest Indiana served up many delicacies such as tenderloin filet, pheasant, scallops, baby lamb chops, perch, bison, alligator, pot roast, scampi and a chocolate fountain that was an epicurean's dream meal to name just a few of the many items served.

The March of Dimes chefs gala is an event anyone who loves great food combined with great mingling should never miss.

Chefs who donated their time and talents to raise money for Northwest Indiana's tiniest citizens, our preemie babies, are as follows: Hipolito Sanchez (Chef Polo) - Avalon Manor; Jack Richey - Billy Jack's Cafe and Catering; Eddie Luick - Bon Femme Cafe; Scott Farrell - Briar Ridge Country Club; Jack and Bill Mix - Comfort's Catering; Tim Merkel - Giovanni's Restaurant and Cocktail Lounge; David Siano - Horseshoe Casino Hammond; Chef Jim and owner Judy Joll - Hot or Not Restaurant; John Graves - Impressions Cafe; **Jim Galligan - Long Beach Country Club**; John Erb and MacGregor Gentleman - Radisson Hotel Star Plaza; Tammy T. Williams - Resorts East Chicago Casino and Hotel; Carlos Rivero and Elena Jambrina - Restaurante Don Quijote; **Michael Clindaniel - Sand Creek Country Club**; David Hemdal - Strongbow Inn; Joseph Pavell - Teibel's; Stephen Labanowski - Trump Hotel and Casino; Mateo Gurrola - Unique Events of Northwest Indiana and John (Jack) Lencioni - Villa Cesare.

Sandra Storey, division director of the March of Dimes Northwest Division, wanted to acknowledge all of the folks who worked so hard and donated so much for this cause including **Jim Galligan of American Federation of Chefs of Northwest Indiana, who organized the Signature Chefs Gala. Many of the chefs are organization members.** Lencioni and auctioneer Deborah Kimball-Crosslin also did an outstanding job.

Chef David and wife Lisa Wodrich served as an ambassador family with their lovely baby Abigail for the gala. Last year they lost one of their beautiful twin girls who was born premature. Also serving as an ambassador family was Bunny and Rick DeMers with their son Logan, who was 16 ounces at birth. Emcee was Laura Waluszko of Radio One Communications. "Red Man" Lang was the pianist along with Kristen Hillegonds as harpist, Stephen Gouwnes as violinist, Ann Nicole Siteer as flautist and Deanne Sanders, who lit up the stage with songs from her CD "Off the Hook."

The beautifully designed towering ice-carvings that flanked the stage were carved by Bud Lies owner of City Pure Ice. Centerpieces were designed by Gay Fraire and Margie Tedesco, and floating roses were donated by Bryan's Floral Designs.

Lithographics communications designer Steve Pokrajac made the programs of metallic pink and silver stunning along with organizer Kristin Stafford of the design team at Lithographics, who must have spent days making the programs a keepsake.

Dennis Crane of Crane photography did the cover shot of the chefs and all the beautifully done photography inside the programs.

White chocolate truffles were provided by Lisa Trinkler Wodrich of Albert Uster Imports - the finest chocolate we have tasted. Shining Star video productions taped the gala and Markey's provided all the video equipment.

Awards were given out to outstanding March of Dimes supporters Joseph Kolavo, president of Sterk's Supermarkets; Richard Pietrzak, president and owner of Lithographics Communications; **Chef Jim Galligan of Long Beach Country Club**; and Tearsa Biernat, Ambassador mom. The 2005 Peoples Choice Award went to Chef Scott Farrell of Briar Ridge Country Club for his mouth-watering pot roast.

The 2005 committee, which worked many long hours to make this event perfect was led by **honorary lead chef Jim Galligan** and Co-chairmen Mago Babineaux of Meinzer and Babineaux Law Offices and Lori Pittman of Braman Agency. The committee included Vicki Anderson, Laura Arnold, Tearsa and Matt Biernat, Annette Borgetti, Dennis Crane, Peggu Domiguez, Carol Elias, Mark Elias, Gay Fraire, Linda George, Sandy Hahn, Teri Hooper, Suzie Kyprianou, Joan McGee, Elaine Merkel, Christine Neal, Jason Rebar, Carolyn Seligman, Kristen Staffors, Sharon Strogiludis, Margie Tedesco, Susanne Vale and Ijunia Vaillancourt.

This year's gala sponsors were Gala Platinum Lithographics Communications, Porter, Post-Tribune, Strack and Van Til and The Times.

Gold sponsors were Bank Calumet, Resorts East Chicago, Franklin D. Van Til Foundation, Meinzer and Babineaux, Methodist Hospitals, Avalon Manor and Renaissance Medical Group.

Folks spotted during the evening included Al Moon, Jim O'Rourke, Pat and Chuck Glissman, Donna O'Rourke, Ralf and Melissa Neff, Joe Kolavo, Laura Baltz, Don Johnson, Mr. and Mrs. Ray Snemis, Greg Engstrom, Keith Bruxvoort, Debra Hobbs,

Speros Batistatos, Mr. and Mrs. Jeff Biesen, Joe and Deb Musenbrock, Carol and Steve Highsmith, Gary and Shar Miller, Doug Kullerstrand, Craig Anderson, Mr. and Mrs. Babineaux, Rick Pietrzak, DeAnn and Greg Sanders, Dr. Robert Cornwell, Gloria Irwin, Scott Bowdish, Marlita Stokes, Mr. and Mrs. Myers, Carl Lindsey, Kathy and John Sipple, Linda George, Ashley Keefer, Courtnie McLellan, Jerry and Beth Edwards, Melanie Martin, Judy Galligan Mr. Meinzer, Pat Mistak, Mary Roman, Mr. and Mrs. James Mola, Paul Anderson, Shirley Wagner, Carol Reeves, Judy Hein, Patsy Zeiolenga, Darrin and Wendy Selking, Jamie and Kamie Bunge, Lakeesha Kesler, Gabi Small, Pat Counts, Rachel Shadley, Angie Crane, Cheryl Molenda, Damian Crosslin and Donna Goldsich.

In 2005, the Northwest Division of the March of Dimes granted three Community Awards to Valparaiso University Nursing School, Maternal Child Health Clinic City of Gary and the St. Anthony Medical Center Prenatal Assistance Program in Crown Point. The March of Dimes Indiana Chapter distributed 13 Chapter Grants around the state. Hilltop Community Health Center in Valparaiso received one of these for its Healthy Beginnings program.

March of Dimes is a national voluntary health agency whose mission is to improve the health of babies by preventing birth defects, premature birth and infant mortality. To donate to the March of Dimes annual giving campaign or if you need further information on how to help our Northwest Indiana's tiniest of Citizens call (219) 736-0023 or (800) 431-9255.