

Holiday benefit for hospital shows it's in League of its own

By Dana Bisbee/ Social Scene

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A Christmas tree forest grew beside a village of gingerbread houses in the Westin Hotel Copley Place Saturday night.

The Children's Hospital League's ``Festival 2004: The Wonder of Children'' celebrated the holiday symbols while raising funds to support a variety of services at Children's Hospital Boston.

``We fund all the stuff to make a child's hospital stay happier,'' said Mary Sue Terranova of Wayland, who co-chaired the gala with Karen Philip and Wendy Simches, both also from Wayland.

League-funded programs include the Big Apple Circus' Clown Care Unit, a pet therapy program, the hospital's Entertainment Center and music and art therapy programs.

The League also funded the Children's Hospital's ambulance, a new Devon Nicole House for patients' families and recently fulfilled a \$1.5 million pledge to the hospital's Center for the Critically Ill Child.

The party's main event was the sale of 15 designer-decorated Christmas trees, which were sold and then donated by their owners to go to other children's charities.

CBS4 news anchors Lisa Hughes and Josh Binswanger were emcees. The on-air duo, accompanied by his wife, Carla Binswanger, and her fiance, Mike Casey, introduced hospital president James Mandell, League president Patti Wayne and two emotion-packed patient parent testimonials.

Karin Lieberman and Carolyn Snider, both of Newton, co-chaired the trees committee. Revelers included Lynne and Gary Smith of Wellesley, Carolyn and Joe Campanelli of Wellesley, and Susan and John Spooner of Boston.

CLAUS AND EFFECT: Santa Claus Anonymous is an organization of young professionals that each Christmas raises funds for a handful of children's causes at one event, the annual Snow Ball.

The 18th annual Snow Ball Friday night at the Park Plaza Hotel benefited 11 local organizations: Boston City Lights, Boston Scholars Program, COMPASS, Courageous Sailing Center, GBARC, MetroLacrosse, Project Joy, The Children's Room, The Family Nurturing Center, Tutoring Plus and Youth Enrichment Services.

More than 1,000 people attended and raised more than \$50,000 for the organizations.

``We heard about this party last year and made it a goal to be selected this year,'' said Boston Scholars Program chairman Robbin Higby of Brookline, who founded the organization 13 months ago.

``Santa Claus Anonymous is an organization that tries to energize young professionals,'' he said. ``We do, too.''

Stephen Macary of Waltham chaired the Snow Ball. Kathy Krason of Boston and Carrie Burr of Newton co-chaired the Black Diamond Champagne Reception, the ball's VIP pre-party. WBOS-FM (92.9) morning hosts Kristin Lessard and Bill Abbate were emcees.

The committee included Amy Scarlino and Bryan Olender of Boston and Denise Lacarubba of Belmont. Guests included Todd Kurland of Marlboro, one of the 15 friends who founded Santa Claus Anonymous during a group blind date in 1987.

``I can't believe I was ever this young,'' Kurland said as the second generation of Snow Ball organizers continued the season's good works.

ART OF CRAFTS: Crafts at the Castle is Family Service of Greater Boston's weekend shopping spree at the Park Plaza Castle.

It opened Thursday night with a preview party, giving hundreds of guests a first chance to buy from 85 craftspeople in a variety of media selected by jury to participate.

``We're a very elite group,'' said metalworker Kristen Alexandra of Boston, daughter of Union Oyster House owner Joe Milano, who sculpts floral-shaped kitchen utensils.

WCVB-TV (Ch. 5) news anchor Pam Cross was honorary chair. She and Family Service of Greater Boston CEO Randall Rucker of Milton greeted guests at the entrance.

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