

Spring Lake Toys Foundation

BY CHRISTINE CHRISTOPOUL

“Buy a toy and spread some joy.” Paulette Pera Laurenzi says she initially conceived the Spring Lake Toys Foundation (SLTF) with that simple motto in mind. A former commercial banking executive and region manager in the Tri-State area, Paulette started the nonprofit and 501c3 to help comfort and cheer sick children, but it quickly evolved into one that provides financial assistance to families fighting serious childhood illnesses. “There are, surprisingly, so many medical and medical related expenses that are not covered by insurance. We believe no family should have to choose between life-saving treatment and paying household bills,” says Paulette.

The foundation holds an annual fundraiser each year, the most recent being it’s fourth Annual Gala Luncheon held October 24th at the Indian Trail Club. The event included a large silent auction, bubbly bar and drew a crowd of approximately 250 people, many of whom come from the Franklin Lakes community. The highlight of the afternoon was being introduced to five of the children currently being helped by the foundation. Each one was honored for their brave battles and as each appeared on stage with their families, the emotion in the room deepened. Josiah, who is 3 years old and suffers from Poland-Moebius Syndrome, is receiving



Osteopathic Manipulative Medicine through a grant from SLTF and his mother, Dennise Santana Morales, credits the treatment with helping him walk. She gave a heartfelt thank you to Paulette and her team saying, “I don’t know what life Josiah would be living without this fabulous organization.”

As the luncheon attendees dabbed away their tears, Paulette took the stage and announced that fellow Franklin Lakes resident Salvatore Frassetto and his company, Saddleback Real Estate Developers, had become the foundation’s first Signature Sponsor. His generous donation combined with large contributions from Clearcom Wireless Services and Inserra Supermarkets has enabled SLTF to greatly increase the support they provide to families who are struggling to cope. When the foundation was founded in 2016, the per family grant cap was \$500. This year, the maximum has been raised exponentially to \$10,000 per family. Paulette also shared the news that Dr. Guiseppina Feingold of NY Hyperbaric Solutions, offered to donate \$5,000 worth of hyperbaric oxygen therapy treatments to each of the children at the luncheon.

In addition to raising money to help families, SLTF also aims to bring awareness to childhood illnesses and the financial challenges they bring. With this in mind, Franklin Lakes resident Suzanne Martin spoke along with her 9-year-old son, Max, who suffers from a rare autoimmune disorder called Pediatric Autoimmune Neuropsychiatric Disorders Associated with Streptococcal Infections (PANDAS). In a heart-wrenching speech, Suzanne discussed the toll this condition has taken on her family; emotionally, physically, socially and financially. She explained that one of the most difficult aspects of her son’s illness is that insurance companies do not cover it. Because of her experiences, her family business, Clearcom Wireless Services has become one of SLTF’s largest sponsors. After listening to Suzanne’s message, the room grew a little somber. But Paulette always keeps her focus on what’s important - the children - and accordingly, she announced she had a special gift for all of the children in attendance. To everyone’s delight, and most appropriately, each child received a large stuffed Panda.

To learn more about Spring Lake Toys Foundation, please visit their website at www.springlaketoyfoundation.org or their Facebook page at www.facebook.com/springlaketoyfoundation.

