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Mia still brings her miracles...

Villa Park charity helps families of ailing children

By Paul DelGuidice
For The Villa Park Independent

On Saturday evening, February 5, many folks gathered in a Diplomat West banquet room to take part in a miracle -- four miracles, actually. The Miracles from Mia Cupid's Kisses fundraiser 2011 was in full swing, and everyone was forgetting about the recent blizzard and their everyday problems as they enjoyed the food and helped raise money for some very needy kids.

"It was a great night for everyone. Lots of fun. And we helped the kids," said Carrie Van Daff, mother of Matthew Van Daff, who is one of the four honored children this year.

Though Matthew himself could not attend due to his fragile health (he was born 2 1/2 years ago with quad spastic cerebral palsy and requires around-the-clock care), his parents Carrie and Dave joined the families of Olivia Rose, Moriah and Kylie at the benefit. Past recipients and their families were also in attendance.

"The food is great. We wouldn't miss this for anything," said Andrew Mazzie as he loaded a plate at the buffet. "My grandson Jackson [Vel-

lone, age 2] was a recipient last year. He's here tonight and doing well. The Miracles From Mia people are fantastic."

The people who 'put on the show' do so out of love and a deep understanding of how difficult it can be to care for a child with a rare disease. Georgianna Clements started an organization called Miracles For Mia back in 2003 as a way to help raise funds to help pay for an operation for daughter Mia, who was born with a rare kidney disease. Unfortunately Mia passed on April 17, 2004, before she was strong enough for the transplant. Clements quickly changed the name of the charity to "Miracles From Mia" and began enlisting volunteers and sponsors to share what she learned as well as to help other families of chronically-ill children.

"We are here to help and our daughter's soul will live on in our hearts as well as in the families that are helped by our organization," according to the MiraclesFromMia.org web site.

All profits from Cupid's Kisses are given to the beneficiary families. According to Van Daff, the costs of caring for children such as Matthew are huge. Even with a great

health insurance plan, there are many needs not covered.

"Matthew requires multiple therapies," Van Daff said. "Insurance may cover one therapy visit a month. Matthew has some form of therapy almost every day. Also there is the cost of the medical equipment and professional nursing."

The money raised by Miracles from Mia is certainly a help to families with much greater worries than just financial. One only needs to speak

for a short time with Georgianna, or a parent of one of the honored children, or one of the kids themselves to realize the money raised is nice, but the true miracle comes from the love and support shown by everyone involved. From the teenagers who mingled with Cupid's Kisses attendees and sold heart-shaped boxes of candy to the person taking pictures at the photo booth, everyone was there to help the kids and have a great evening.

This year's Cupid's Kisses event certainly lived up to the spirit of Mia and, judging by the big smiles, laughter and generosity of the attendees, the benefit was a huge success.

For more information about Miracles from Mia, including upcoming events, sponsorship and volunteer opportunities point your web browser to www.miraclesfrommia.org. To learn more about Matthew Van Daff, check out www.matthewvandafftrust.com.



photo by Paul DelGuidice

Having a ball at Cupid's Kisses

Olivia Rose, 2, (sitting on dad Dan's lap), mom Julie, brother Danny, 8, and sister Angelina, 5, are joined by Miracles From Mia volunteer Mary Scheff during dinner at the 2011 Cupid's Kisses benefit held on Saturday, Feb. 5 and organized by the Miracles From Mia Foundation.