

THE 35th Anniversary Gala was a tremendous success thanks to the generosity of our donors!

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HARMONY HEIGHTS NEWSLETTER

FALL/WINTER 2009

# 35th Anniversary Gala

## A Night to Remember



October 24th was a special evening, when Harmony's friends, staff and parents gathered at the Residence to celebrate the 35th Anniversary of Harmony and to honor Ellen Benson. Despite the pouring rain, the Residence sparkled and the air was filled with excitement as people toasted and celebrated the wonderful work Harmony has done for 35 years in helping girls heal.

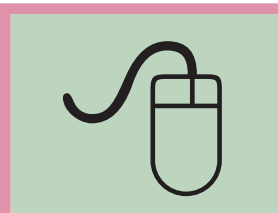
The highlight of the evening was the tribute to Ellen Benson, who has been at Harmony since its inception, rising from social worker to Executive Director.

Her daughter, Jocelyn Benson, her longtime colleague and social worker, Mary McCartin, and the members of the COW(Committee of the Whole); Ellen Laino, Kathy Nastri, Lori Neazer, all spoke glowingly of Ellen Benson and the wonderful work she has done at Harmony. Eileen Harney, presented Ellen a special heart ornament on behalf of the staff. Board members, Denis Garbo, Ellen Dulik and Hugh Mahoney presented her a Scroll of Honor, listing the sponsors of the event.

The evening featured a Chinese and silent auction and grand raffle with dozens of items that were generously donated by the community, parents and staff. Dinner was provided by Country Plaza Deli with music by Racket. A beautiful calendar designed by Harmony staff members, Theresa Cherba and Mary Garthwaite and chocolate lollipops made by the students in the Culinary Arts class, were given out as favors.

Special thanks goes to the Gala Committee whose members included staff, parents and alumni. Our thanks also go to Kathy Nastri and her staff for making the Residence a magical place for the evening, Victor Araya for all his help including pulling cars out of the muddy parking lot, parent Gail Karp, alumni parent Laurie Metaxas, Lorraine DeBellis, Rose Marie Oliver and Catherine DiPrima for putting together an incredible raffle.

As people danced into the night, it was a wonderful evening marking a milestone in the special place that is Harmony Heights where "Hope Happens."



Check out our  
New Web Site at:  
[www.harmonyheights.org](http://www.harmonyheights.org)

# A Message From Denis Garbo

To all the great friends of Harmony Heights:

On behalf of our Board of Directors, I'd like to thank all of you who attended or otherwise participated in the success of our recent 35th Anniversary Gala celebration. Not only was it a fun evening for everyone, but just as important, it surpassed our goals from a financial perspective. But our work is not done.

With input from our administrative staff, the Board has identified several areas of need which will require an extraordinary infusion of cash to address.

A high priority is the upgrading of facilities at the residence. While Harmony Heights just celebrated its 35th year, the residence will soon be celebrating its 90th! And as beautiful as the facility is, for the most part, it's all original.

Specifically, all the bathrooms need to be upgraded and modernized for the comfort and benefit of our young women. Also, many of the windows need to be replaced with more energy efficient ones so that we may save in fuel costs over the long term.

To address these and similar needs, we are establishing a "Residence Restoration Fund", since funding for these capital improvements cannot be covered by our normal tuition reimbursement rate.

During this annual "season of giving", we ask that you consider making a gift to Harmony Heights. By doing so, you will help to ensure the continued success of our mission and maintain Harmony Heights' reputation as the premier facility for the specific at-risk population we so proudly serve.

Best wishes for a happy and safe holiday season.

Denis P. Garbo  
Board President

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

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Ellen Laino, *Principal*

Kathy Nastri, *Residential Director*

Lori Neazer, *Clinical Director*

Harmony Heights

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# A Message from Ellen Benson

Dear Parents, Students and Friends,

I know it is a cliché, but where does the time go? Many of you probably already know Harmony Heights and I celebrated our 35th Anniversary. As a much younger woman I could never imagine being 35, never the less remaining in the same agency for 35 years. Fortunately I am joined in my commitment to Harmony Heights by a number of very dedicated and professional staff members. This in itself is quite remarkable, but what is even more remarkable is Harmony Heights' ability to withstand the test of time and maintain the high quality of care to adolescent girls despite the ongoing systemic and financial challenges inherent in our industry. Many people and many industries are currently facing catastrophic financial challenges, but for 35 years Harmony Heights, despite our financial limitations, has successfully met the academic and emotional challenges of the adolescent girls entrusted to our care. Every academic and emotional triumph our girls experience enforces mine and my staff's commitment to our mission and propels us forward. As 2009 comes to an end I am overwhelmed by gratitude for having had the opportunity to be a small part of this huge and important mission.

As we move into the joyous holiday season I wish you all a happy New Year filled with hope and purpose.

Sincerely,  
Ellen Benson

## Save the Dates

April 21, 2010

The 3rd Annual

## FASHION SHOW & SHOPPING BOUTIQUE



April 30, 2010

Harmony Heights  
presents the play

## ANASTASIA

## New After-School Program Funded by The Patrina Foundation

A Thursday after-school program has been initiated at Harmony and funded through a generous grant by the Patrina Foundation. The program, which began in September, features a tutoring and a physical fitness component. Operating from 3:30 to 5:00 p.m., the girls receive individualized tutoring from a Harmony special education teacher and participate in a physical fitness activity, which has included volleyball, and the new dance/fitness craze zumba. Joy Kovanda, a special

education teacher and the afterschool program coordinator said of the program, "The after-school program allows us to work one-on-one with the girls and really concentrate on their individual areas of academic weakness. It also allows us to have fun while being physically active."

The Patrina Foundation has been a long time supporter of Harmony and we are very grateful for their continued support.\*

## Attorney Saundra M. Gumerove Speaks to Parent Support Group

Saundra M. Gumerove, Esq., the mother of a daughter with special needs and an expert in special education and disabilities law made a well received presentation on "Looking to the Future: Fundamental Issues of Confronting Families of Children with Disabilities." to the Harmony Parent Support group on the December 8, 2009. Ms. Gumerove, specializes her law practice in the areas of special education, guardianship, life planning (including special needs trusts), special needs settlement planning, estate planning and government entitlements. She is also active in numerous disability organizations and writes an informative website entitled Advokidsblogs.com. Ms. Gumerove spoke to the Parent Support Group on this topic last year and graciously agreed to speak again as the parents found it to be so informative.

The Harmony Parent Support Group meets monthly and is directed by Executive Director, Ellen Benson and Clinical Director, Lori Neazer for parents of both residential and day students. At this group, parents share their experiences and their concerns and provide support for each other. The support group also features speakers including alumni and alumni parents who share their after Harmony experiences as well as speakers in special education issues, like Ms. Gumerove who share their expertise with the Harmony parents.

The next Parent Support meeting is on January 12, 2010.\*

## THANKSGIVING 2009



Fun, Food  
& Time  
for Thanks!

