

KRISTI



HOUSE

CONTACTS:

Event Contact:
Bianca Fernandez, Development Officer
bfernandez@kristihouse.org
305-547-6802

Trudy Novicki, Executive Director
tnovicki@kristihouse.org
305-547-6836

DATE: April 30, 2012
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Kristi House and 400 supporters dedicated to *Breaking the Silence* of child sexual abuse convene for 6th Annual event

Kristi House and 400 friends and supporters came together for organization's 6th Annual *Breaking the Silence* program designed to build awareness and focus attention on the epidemic of child sexual abuse. Leon Medical Centers and Tutti Bambini were presenting sponsors of the luncheon on April 19 held at Jungle Island. The event netted \$253,000 in gifts and pledges for Kristi House programs.

"We have to make a shift in consciousness about child sexual abuse and exploitation, just as we did with smoking, women's rights and civil rights," Dr. Wayne Dyer, internationally recognized inspirational speaker and author of many best-sellers, told the audience in a keynote address. "We now have to look at this thing that's been invisible. Before I became aware of what was happening to little girls all over our planet, [child sexual exploitation] was invisible to me. It wasn't something I imagined was happening."

The event was led by a host committee of Kristi House supporters: Michelle & Ken Charles, Silvia & Joseph Corral, Rachelle & A.J. de Moya, Stephanie Demos & Chris Brown, Serena Dyer & Matt Pisoni, Jessica Hernandez-Lopez & Anthony Lopez, Lourdes Leon-Vega & Dr. Otto Vega, and Valerie & Cesar Pazmino. Dozens of Table Captains and community leaders filled tables of 10 for this Kristi House signature awareness- and fund-raising luncheon.

Miami-Dade State Attorney Katherine Fernandez Rundle welcomed guests and highlighted the State Attorney's Office partnership with Kristi House and others who work to investigate, prosecute and treat child sexual abuse cases. She recognized the support and commitment of many public officials present and the Leon Family, and saluted the leadership of outgoing, four-year Board President Frederick Bredemeyer II.

Guests also heard from survivors of child sexual abuse, including a young woman who received therapy services at Kristi House. She read an excerpt from her trauma narrative about overcoming years of sexual abuse by her father.

“I thank God for my therapist Livia at Kristi House. I came into foster care angry at everyone, wanting to hurt, crying every time I went to bed, but Livia’s positive words would follow me around after I left each therapy meeting,” she said. “Being in therapy made me realize that I’m not the only one...and I’m standing here for all the sad, for all the shy, for all the scared and lonely people out there walking around angry at the world, not knowing that there is someone out there that loves them.”

Another child sexual abuse survivor, Lavinia Freeman, now a mother of three school-age children, told her story of overcoming years of sexual abuse by an older cousin after keeping the secret for more than two decades. She founded “No Longer Invisible”, a survivor organization, to draw attention to the fact that there are unseen scores of others carrying around the secret, shame and lingering trauma of child sexual abuse.

Guests were welcomed to event by a talented student from University of Miami who is a volunteer with Kristi House, Sarah Varughese, who performed her own song “Hold On to Twelve” to a spellbound audience.

Kristi House was founded 16 years ago to bring together the legal, medical and emotional support services needed to help child sexual abuse victims and their non-offending family members. Kristi House serves as the Children’s Advocacy Center for all of Miami-Dade County, working closely with seven other agency partners.

Kristi House is located on the University of Miami/Jackson Memorial Hospital campus at 1265 NW 12 Ave. Its south facility is located on U.S. Highway 1 and 152nd Street, and its north facility is located at 18441 NW and 2nd Avenue. Founded in 1996, Kristi House has served more than 8,000 victims of child sexual abuse and their families. Thousands more are reached every year with education and prevention outreach programs. Services include case coordination/case management, therapy, comprehensive assessments, transportation, advocacy and emergency assistance. Visit www.kristihouse.org for more details.

###