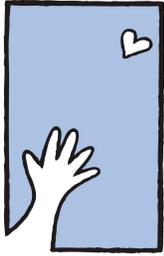


KRISTI



HOUSE

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CONTACTS:

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

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

Kristi House and 500 supporters dedicated to *Breaking the Silence* of child sexual abuse convene for 5th Anniversary event

Kristi House and 500 friends and supporters came together for organization's 5th Anniversary *Breaking the Silence* program designed to build awareness and focus attention on the epidemic of child sexual abuse. Leon Medical Centers was presenting sponsor of the luncheon on April 29 held at the beautiful Downtown Miami J.W. Marriott Marquis. The event netted \$260,000 in gifts and pledges for Kristi House.

This year marked Leon Medical Centers' fifth year of underwriting and lead philanthropic support for the event, having been involved since the founding of the program in 2007. Lourdes Leon-Vega served as Philanthropic Chair, and event co-chairs were Julia Bianchi, Rachelle de Moya and Michelle Barreau-Charles. Fifty-six table captains each filled tables of 10 for the major awareness- and fund-raising event.

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. Executive Director Trudy Novicki presented the vision of Kristi House, and what progress has been made.

Guests also heard from survivors who were helped by Kristi House, including a 16-year-old girl who has overcome the trauma of years of sexual abuse to become a top student and gifted writer. Crediting her Kristi House therapist for enabling her recovery, she read an excerpt of her short story that she is working on publishing. Kristi House's Sandy Skelaney, program manager of Project GOLD for commercially sexually exploited girls, gave a moving account of her years on the streets and how she recovered from childhood trauma.

"The courageous young survivors we heard from this year epitomize what *Breaking the Silence* is all about. We are finally seeing widespread recognition of child sexual abuse as the public health epidemic it is," Kristi House Executive Director Trudy Novicki said. "We are experiencing a sea change in understanding, and an emergence of those willing to speak out, seek solutions, and break the silence."

In addition, two other talented high school students performed: 17-year-old Perla Fernandez sang an *a cappella* solo of Celine Dion's The Prayer; and 17-year-old Samantha Turner, a spoken word poet from North Miami High School, performed a poem about a young trafficking victim.

Kristi House was founded 15 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.

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