

Riverbend Head Start & Family Services celebrates "a century of caring" in 23rd Annual Circle of Care

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GODFREY - Riverbend Head Start & Family Services held its 23rd Annual Circle of Care on May 19th at the Lewis and Clark Community College Commons. Lisa Nielsen and Michael Moehn were honored for their commitment to community betterment. Nielsen and Moehn, both raised in Alton, have served on many non-profit boards and have worked with numerous charitable organizations. Their demonstrated support has made a positive difference in the Greater St. Louis area.

This year's Circle of Care, themed A Century of Caring for a Brighter Future, also celebrated Riverbend Head Start & Family Services' 100th Anniversary milestone. The agency was founded in 1916 as the Alton Public Welfare Council. Over the last century, the organization's name and programs have evolved, but the mission has remained much the same.

The fundraiser began with a cocktail hour featuring the musical talents of local pianist, Gigi Darr. Guests mingled and perused the variety of wonderful items up for auction which included works of art by Joe Emons, Marty McKay and Jeff Vaughn; several sports packages; vacation opportunities and various catered parties in esteemed Alton locations, one being at the Nielsen-Moehn home with Olympic Medalist Jackie Joyner-Kersey as the guest of honor.

The invocation was delivered by Father Ed Murphy of St. Vincent de Paul of St. Louis, a personal friend of the honorees. A delicious dinner of Prime Rib, pasta, salad, seasonal vegetables and assorted desserts, prepared by the wonderful catering staff of Lewis and Clark Community College, was served in stations.

As guests enjoyed their desserts, Emmy Award winning anchorwoman and Emcee, Karen Foss, kicked off the program and kept the momentum flowing. Chuck Parr, Riverbend Head Start & Family Services President & CEO spoke to the crowd of 290 about the agency's 100 year history and its everlasting important role in helping at-risk children and their families.

Other speakers included Michael McMillan, The President of the Urban League of Metropolitan St. Louis, and Dave Braasch, Chairman of the Riverbend Head Start Board of Directors and President of Alton Memorial Hospital. McMillan delivered a testament sprinkled in humor about the faith, love of family, humility and selfless service of the Circle of Care Honorees; Braasch presented the couple with their award.

Lisa Nielsen and Michael Moehn then graciously addressed the crowd, thanking Riverbend Head Start & Family Services for the honor and describing their reasons for supporting for the agency and other charitable service organizations. Each spoke about the importance of philanthropy and giving back to the community in areas most in need. The evening concluded with an animated live auction lead by energetic auctioneer Maurice File.

Through event sponsorships (lead sponsors Ameren, John & Jayne Simmons, ABB, Joyce Aboussie, Intren and KS Energy Services), reservations and auction earnings, the event generated a record \$162,000. Proceeds from the Circle of Care benefit the children and families enrolled in Riverbend Head Start & Family Services'

programs. Without the community's support, the organization would not be able to provide its critical services which build solid educational foundations and empowered families.

Riverbend Head Start & Family Services currently operates six centers in Madison County, providing quality early childhood education, nutrition and health education, in-home case manager visits, dental evaluations, parental-skills development and more. During the 2015-16 school year, 850 children, ages birth to five, and their families were served.

For more information on how to support Riverbend Head Start & Family Services, please contact PR Director, Heather Hope at 618.463.8913 or at hhope@riverbendfamilies.org