



Riverbend Head Start & Family Services Raised \$48,500 at 2011 Circle of Care Event Honoring Dr. Robert and Charlene Hamilton

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MADISON COUNTY, IL, May 17, 2011 . . . A record amount was raised by Riverbend Head Start & Family Service's Circle of Care event, which honored Dr. Robert and Charlene Hamilton on May 12. Preliminary figures show that \$48,000 will benefit the agency's programs, which serve Madison County's at-risk preschoolers, from birth to kindergarten.

The Hamiltons were honored for making an impact on the community through their professions, volunteerism and philanthropy. Dr. Hamilton, a retired surgeon, most recently spearheaded the Alton- Godfrey Rotary mural project in downtown Alton. He works tirelessly for better healthcare through medical associations and "think tanks." Mrs. Hamilton is also deeply involved in charitable activities.

In accepting the 2011 Circle of Care award, the Hamilton's recognized that it takes strong families to make strong communities and issued a call to action to the guests to continue reaching out to those in need through their own professions, volunteerism and philanthropy.

"This organization, this award, this dinner and all of the voluntary contributions and donations all of you make have one common theme - humanity. We can't make this a perfect world, but we can all use our gifts and talents, however limited, to make it better," said Dr. Hamilton.

The event, held at Lockhaven Country Club, entertained 240 guests. Special guests for the evening were their daughter, Laura Muldowney, from Dublin, Ireland; their son, Dr. Richard Hamilton, from Lakeland, FL; son, attorney Phil Hamilton, and his family from Alton.

Other family members came from out-of-state to honor the couple. In her speech Mrs. Hamilton said, "Three of those present are retired early childhood teachers for a total of one hundred-plus years of teaching preschoolers and early elementary school teachers."

Early childhood education and parenting education are two of the methods the nonprofit Riverbend Head Start & Family Services uses to reverse the effects of childhood poverty in Madison County, Illinois and prepare low-income children for kindergarten.

"Touring the classrooms and seeing the excellent teachers, stimulating environment, and bright-eyed response of the children was an 'eye-opener'," said Mrs. Hamilton, "Touring the neighborhoods on Head Start buses where the children live was as well."

The nonprofit's Head Start program is funded in part by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. It must match its grant with local support through fundraisers like Circle of Care.

Steering Committee member, Karen Wilson emceed the evening, stating that the committee surpassed its fundraising goal. She noted that it takes many volunteers to make an event like Circle of Care a success. A committee of the Hamilton's friends planned and promoted the event. They included: Gay and Bill Bryant, Mary Lou and Steve Cousley, Sharon and Rod Elias, Susan and Phil Hamilton, Louise and Jackson Jehle, Mary Lou and Paul Maley, Judith and Steven Mottaz, Bonnie and Chuck Norman, Arlene and Mike Osborne, Meredith and Dr. Edward Ragsdale, John Rain, Vi and Dr. Robert Randall, Rosalind Walker, Karen and Dennis Wilson.

For their guests, the Hamiltons raised their voices by performing with an ensemble from the Great Rivers Choral Society, carrying out the event theme, "Music in the Air." The Hamiltons are founding members of the Choral Society and avid music fans.

Mike Eckhard and Rip Kastaris, the artists for the Rotary's steamboat mural, produced a video celebrating the lives of the honorees and emphasizing their lifetime of achievements and contributions. It was narrated by 2008 Circle of Care award recipient, Diana Enloe.

Riverbend Head Start has recognized leaders in the community for the last 18 years. Past recipients of the Circle of Care award are: Dr. Paul Pierce, Rod and Jane St. Clair,

Essic Robinson, Dale and Carol Neudecker, Judge Nicholas Byron, Josephine Beckwith, Jim Goodwin, Buddy Davis, Paul and Sandy Lauschke, Jack and Betty Jacoby, Don Miller, Anna Beach and Andy Simpson, Ron McMullen, Steve and Mary Lou Cousley, Senator William Haine, Tom and Jeana Hutchinson, Bill and Pat Kessler, Diana Enloe, Ed and Nancy Ryrie, and Mike and Cindy Lefferson.

Revenue for the event comes from sponsorships, program ads, and event attendance. Corporate sponsors included: Alton Memorial Hospital, Argosy Alton, Conoco Phillips Wood River Refinery, Dr. Robert and Charlene Hamilton, Mike Kniepman at Holmes Murphy & Associates, Landmark Properties, Lefferson & Associates, Morrissey Construction Services, Norton & Rain, Piasa Motor Fuels, Regions Morgan Keegan Trust, Riverbender.com, Southern Bus & Mobility, The BANK of Edwardsville, The Telegraph, and WBGZ Radio/Alton Daily News.com.

Riverbend Head Start & Family Services provides early childhood education, parenting education, health and social services to nearly 1,000 children and their families through its Alton, Edwardsville, Collinsville, Granite City and Venice Head Start centers. Its goal is to strengthen families and prepare economically disadvantaged children for kindergarten. www.riverbendfamilies.org