

Equestrian Chic Gala

The elegant equestrian themed dinner and awards ceremony took place at the historic Biscayne Bay Yacht Club and raised \$80,000 for Whispering Manes Therapeutic Riding Facility, the official charity partner of Give Back for Special Equestrians.

January 8, 2024



Sissy DeMaria-Koehne, Dana Nateman and Dr Heather Kuhl

Give Back for Special Equestrians, a non-profit founded in 2013 providing horse-back riding scholarships for disabled children and veterans, held a bayside soiree to commemorate a decade of volunteerism and honor ten “grand champions” of equine therapy.

The elegant equestrian themed dinner and awards ceremony took place at the historic Biscayne Bay Yacht Club. Sponsored by Coastal Construction, Coral Gables Trust, The Nancy Batchelor Team – Compass, TruckMax, Braman Bentley, and Cultivate PR + Social Media, the event raised \$80,000 for Whispering Manes Therapeutic Riding Facility, the official charity partner of Give Back for Special Equestrians.



Doris Neyra, Nancy Batchelor and Motaz Ashri



Kevin and Dana Nateman

Guests attended the cocktail reception dressed in equestrian chic attire and classic riding habits. They enjoyed delicacies like cracked conch, sautéed snapper, and coconut cake while taking in the sea breezes and rhythms of saxophonist Jorge Gomez.

Give Back for Special Equestrians co-founders Sissy DeMaria-Koehne and Dr. Heather Kuhl spoke to the all-volunteer non-profit's enduring legacy, from its early beginnings as Give a Buck, when horse owners were asked to give as little as a buck or as much as they could, to its most recent accomplishment of providing more than \$600,000 for horseback riding scholarships for disabled children and veterans.

“We are extremely proud to mark this milestone anniversary, and we extend our heartfelt gratitude to the philanthropists who have made it possible for us to bring the healing power of horsepower to children and veterans facing challenges such as autism, Down syndrome, spina bifida, paralysis, and post-traumatic stress disorder,” said DeMaria-Koehne, Co-Founder and CEO of Give Back for Special Equestrians.

“This celebration is a testament to the remarkable impact we’ve made together. Every dollar raised during this special evening is a step closer to ensuring that our partner Whispering Manes can provide more life-changing riding lessons for those with disabilities,” added Dr. Kuhl, Co-Founder and President.



Dr. Kate Withers, Doris Neyra and Motaz Ashri



Dwight Kuhl and Dr. Heather Kuhl



Dana Nateman, Jon and Nancy Batchelor



John Harris, Vitor Petrescu, Sharon Vosseller and Dr Heather Kuhl



Pat Viteri, Joan Branciforte and Helen Picard



Nancy Tripodi and Nancy Hector



Doris Neyra and Margery Stone



Michelle Haast and Daphne Plug



Miami Dade County Court Judge Steven Leifman, Nancy Hector and Nancy Tripodi



Sissy DeMaria-Koehne, and Guenther Koehne



Marianne Devine, Nancy Cole, and Nancy Batchelor



Libby Herrera-Navarrete



John Harris, Nancy Batchelor, Nancy Hector and Dana Nateman

Libby Herrera-Navarrete, a parent of a student at Whispering Manes spoke passionately about their own personal experience with equine therapy and its life changing benefits of empowerment, freedom and powerful connection between horse and rider.

Receiving the Grand Champion Award was Nancy Hector, an advocate for children's causes, and a lover of horses who founded Whispering Manes Therapeutic Riding Facility, the stable partner of Give Back for Special Equestrians.

Recognized with the Champion Awards were:

Nancy Batchelor, accomplished in both equestrian pursuits and real estate, serves as a board member for Give Back for Special Equestrians. She also holds the distinction of being one of the top ten realtors in Miami and ranks in the top 1 percent of realtors nationwide. Alongside her family, through The Batchelor Foundation,

Batchelor has committed to making it their life's mission to give back to their communities. They support numerous charities, including Whispering Manes, University of Miami UHealth, Chapman Partnership, and the Humane Society, among many others.

John Harris, Managing Director of Coral Gables Trust, with 30 years of experience managing trust and investment services and private banking and active member of the community, is involved with charitable organizations including Give Back for Special Equestrians, the Coral Gables Community Foundation, the University of Miami Citizens Board, The United Way of Miami-Dade County, The Coral Gables Chamber of Commerce, the International Wine and Food Society and the Georgetown University Alumni Association.

Dana Nateman, Vice President and Partner at TruckMax, her family-owned commercial dealership with locations throughout Florida, is a native of Miami and former equestrian, who appreciates the benefits of equine therapy for the vulnerable group of children and veterans and is a past Board Member of Kristi House.

Recognized in absence were Christy Powell, Isabel Ersnt, The Cabrerizo Family, Susan and Jim Carr and the Thomas P. Murphy, Jr. Family.



Nancy Batchelor accepts her award from Sissy DeMaria-Koehne



Sissy DeMaria-Koehne, John Harris and Dr Heather Kuhl



Table setting



Table arrangement



Guests at the Biscayne Bay Yacht Club



Bentley



Musician



Guests at the Biscayne Bay Yacht Club



Biscayne Bay Yacht Club

ABOUT GIVE BACK FOR SPECIAL EQUESTRIANS

Give Back for Special Equestrians was founded in 2013 by Sissy DeMaria-Koehne, Dr. Heather Kuhl, and Isabel Ernst and is registered as a 501(c)3 all-volunteer non-profit in Florida that provides therapeutic horseback riding scholarships for disabled children and veterans.

The organization believes in horsepower that heals and raises funds for therapeutic horseback riding and equine assisted scholarships for children and veterans facing some of life's most difficult challenges such as Autism, Down Syndrome, Spina Bifida, paralysis, and post-traumatic stress disorder so that they can experience this life changing therapy. Give Back for Special Equestrians raises funds through corporate sponsorships, generous donors and fundraising events such as the Winter Equestrian Festival, Hampton Classic, and Polo matches and has proudly raised over \$500,000 in support of special needs riders.

Give Back for Special Equestrians Young Ambassadors, children, and teens ages 7-17 are the backbone of the organization providing ongoing support through hands-on volunteering, fundraising, “friend” raising, and drawing awareness to the charity’s mission.

In 2021 Give Back for Special Equestrians formed a strategic alliance with Whispering Manes Therapeutic Riding facility in Miami.

For more information on Give Back for Special Equestrians visit www.givebackeq.org.

ABOUT WHISPERING MANES THERAPEUTIC RIDING CENTER

Whispering Manes Therapeutic Riding Center is a 501(c)(3), non-profit organization offering therapeutic horseback riding and therapeutic horsemanship classes for people with physical, cognitive, and emotional disabilities. Through safe and supervised individually tailored programs with specialized horses, participants with a wide range of disabilities are given the opportunity to participate in equine assisted activities that promote physical, cognitive, or emotional well-being. Centrally located in Miami-Dade County they serve a community that would otherwise not have access to equine assisted activities. Participants interact with horses through un-mounted and mounted activities while being supervised by PATH certified professionals. The program aims to promote improvements in core and overall muscle strength, balance, gross and fine motor skills and communication skills. Additionally, participants frequently achieve a sense of self-accomplishment and self-esteem that is promoted by the powerful bond between humans and horses.

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