The Spirit of Giving and the Joys of Philanthropy

One of the loveliest things about Ocean Reef is that the spirit of giving doesn’t end with the holiday season.

Since All Charities was initiated in 2008, it has generated $3.15 million that has been allocated beyond the gates by the Ocean Reef Community Foundation. Beneficiaries include nonprofits in education, civic development, the arts, family services, childhood development and youth programs, homelessness, housing, hunger and nutrition, domestic abuse, disabilities therapy, autism, hospice, and the environment.

“On campus” beneficiaries include the Ocean Reef Chapel Foundation, ORCC Historical Society, Ocean Reef Volunteer Fire Department, and U.S. Coast Guard Flotilla 13-4.

A tremendous amount of heart is invested behind the scenes in order to raise such funds. What inspires that sense of commitment? The simple answer is love of place, community, and friends.

Under-promising and Over-delivering for All Charities

Per Nick Lanni, co-chair of this seasons Feb. 6 and 7 All Charities Weekend, “I asked Jimmy John Liautaud. Founder of the Jimmy John’s sandwich franchise with more than 2,000 locations, to be our Chair of Special Events for two reasons. First and foremost because Jimmy and his family absolutely love Ocean Reef – he thinks it is the greatest place on Earth, and secondly, I’ve known him for many years, and I know that he always under-promises and over-delivers. I am delighted to have him as part of our team.”

To hear Mr. Liautaud (who goes professionally by ‘Jimmy John’) tell it, “Nick is my buddy. He said, ‘I’ll help me: Let’s do it once and let’s do it right; will you support me? I said ‘Yes’ … It’s been Leslie’s and my pleasure.”

Jimmy John and his wife Leslie’s commitment to All Charities began seven years ago when they were asked by their friend John Healy to help with the Medical Center and the Cultural Center. In the years since, the Liautauds have been Community Trustees for All Charities, have frequently bid on multiple high-ticket items at the annual Live Auction, and have kept coming back.

“After going through some extraordinarily difficult times both professionally and personally, Ocean Reef has repeatedly been a healing and positive place for both of us. This affected us so profoundly, we want to help preserve and enhance it for others who are as emotionally attached to ORC as we are.” With his trademark smile, he adds, “And it’s a hell of a lot of fun.”

Asking Friends to Support the Cause

So much so that for the 2015 event, he’s ensured that the fun will continue by coaxing celebrity contacts to offer VIP experiences with Chef Mario Batali, Gay Hertz, Zac Brown, Kid Rock, the cast of Modern Family, and NASCAR’s Daytona 500 to go on the auction block. "It’s never difficult to ask real friends to help.”

Jimmy John’s willingness to ask for that help for All Charities springs from his and Leslie’s desire to improve peoples lives in meaningful ways. They have built a school in Africa; helped build a hospital in Lithuania as well as a free health clinic in Champaign, Illinois, and support Chicago’s Lurie Children’s Hospital and the Mayo Clinic. “But the most philanthropic thing we do is, we create about 9,000 new jobs a year in America. My philosophy on philanthropy is the same as my philosophy on life: Do unto others.”

The technique he brings to All Charities is the same that he employs at work: “Serve the team that serves the team that serves the sandwiches. It’s an upside-down triangle, with me at the bottom: I serve up. Then we share in the upside. If I’m eating cake so are my teammates.”

Sometimes the Simplest Things are the Most Meaningful

Jimmy John’s favorite All Charities memory isn’t of a particular item or bidding or what was purchased. It’s of the first time he ever wore a tux at Ocean Reef, he and Leslie were renting a tiny little apartment, and, “She came out of the bedroom looking beautiful and we headed over for a date. THAT was special.”

This season’s All Charities Weekend will begin with a community wine tasting the evening of Feb. 6, continue with the Silent Auction Showcase, a rum tasting, and a NetJets presentation during the day Feb. 7, culminate with a black tie dinner and dancing at the Giving Hearts Ball and Live Auction that night.

To learn more about the Ocean Reef Foundation, call the ORF at 305-367-4707 or visit www.orcfoundation.org. For more information about All Charities, please contact Lesa Crayne at 305-367-5996 or lcrayne@oceanreef.com.

Stay tuned. Next time, “An All Charities Toast to the New Year”.

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