



For Immediate Release

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**VOICES FOR CHILDREN FOUNDATION CELEBRATES ADVOCATES FOR
ABUSED, ABANDONED, AND NEGLECTED CHILDREN IN MIAMI-DADE
COUNTY**

November 3rd, 2008—Miami, FL—Nearly 450 guests came together at the 14th Annual Be A Voice Awards Luncheon on October 10th at Jungle Island. Held by Voices For Children Foundation, the fundraising arm of the 11th Judicial Circuit Guardian Ad Litem Program, the event was presented by Stearns Weaver Miller Weissler Alhadeff & Sitterson, P.A. and raised over \$198,000 in revenue and in-kind support to benefit abused, abandoned, and neglected children in Miami-Dade County. In spite of the current economic downturn, the Be A Voice Luncheon had an over 29% increase in the support raised from the year before, showing that child abuse prevention is still an important priority in our community.

The Luncheon represents an annual tradition at Voices For Children Foundation of celebrating its Most Valuable Protectors, community members who have demonstrated outstanding support and commitment for the organization on behalf of the abused, abandoned, and neglected children of Miami-Dade County. County commissioners, community members, business leaders, friends, and supporters poured into Jungle Island's Treetop Ballroom, which was beautifully decorated in the theme of Voices' colors—red, black, and white—and featured megaphone centerpieces created by art students at Ojus Elementary School, representing the organization's slogan "Be A Voice." For the second consecutive year, this event was presented by Stearns Weaver Miller Weissler Alhadeff & Sitterson, P.A., whose support is invaluable to the organization's mission. "We are proud of our on-going partnership with Voices For Children and pleased to support their mission to provide critical resources to vulnerable children in our community," said Rick Schatz, the firm's Managing Director.

Throughout the event, guests participated in a silent auction that included a wide variety of items displayed in several categories, including travel & leisure, jewelry, sports memorabilia, and fashion & beauty. The program included a warm welcome by Dr. Michael N. Rosenberg, Chair of Voices For Children's Board of Directors, who wholeheartedly thanked the Luncheon's three event Chairs, Abigail Price-Williams, Esq., Bunchy Gertner, and Andrea Steinacker, who every year make this success possible. Daniella Levine, founder of the Human Services Coalition and dedicated advocate for the needs of children and families, served as the Luncheon's Emcee.

One of the most memorable moments in the program was the testimonial provided by Katiana, a young woman who spent eight years in foster care until she transitioned out, and is now a pre-law student and the proud mother of an 8 year old daughter. Katiana's story, which

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received a standing ovation, conveyed appreciation for the volunteers that have given her the inner strength to succeed despite the obstacles she faced as a foster child.

This year, the Most Valuable Protector Awards had five recipients, including Joni Goodman, who recently retired after serving as the Executive Director of the 11th Judicial Guardian Ad Litem Program for over twenty-five years. The recipients of Voices For Children's 2008 MVP Awards are:

- *Advocate Award: Joni Goodman*
A child advocate for over 26 years, Joni Goodman began with a handful of staff and volunteers in the Guardian Ad Litem Program and, through leadership and determination, has made the Program one of the largest and most respected in the country. As the Executive Director of the GAL Program, Joni's expertise and tireless activism have ensured that the children in Miami-Dade's foster care system have the guidance of a caring adult, nurturing opportunities, and other resources to enrich their lives.
- *Corporate Leadership Award: Kevin McCarty*
As Branch Manager of the largest International Office of Citi Smith Barney in the U.S., Kevin McCarty has been a sponsor of Voices For Children's Annual Toy Drive for the past ten years. His strong sense of community is contagious, as shown by the record five Guardians from his branch office.
- *Legal Advocacy Award: Hogan & Hartson LLP*
Their Community Services Department has attracted both high impact matters raising issues of public importance, as well as smaller cases. Their work has positively impacted the lives of the abused and neglected children of Miami-Dade County, as they have never once waived in their goal to ensure the courts preserved children's best interests and their right to a safe and permanent home.
- *Philanthropy Award: The Continental Group*
Since their initial attendance to our annual Be A Voice Gala in 2004, The Continental Group has been involved in our commitment to abused and neglected children. Last year, the property management and service company sponsored 750 of our children in our Annual Holiday Toy Drive, making sure that each child had multiple toys to open, and they continually support our efforts.
- *Voices For Children Award: Bellak Color*
A printing company on the cutting-edge of technology, Bellak Color has provided endless pro-bono services for event collateral for Voices For Children Foundation.

The mission of Voices For Children Foundation is to raise funds to ensure that every abused, abandoned, and neglected child in Miami-Dade County has a court appointed Guardian Ad Litem to represent their best interests in court and that financial assistance and other resources are available to meet their needs. Be A Voice, visit www.voices4.org.

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While we are proud of the landmark legal victories achieved for our clients, we are equally proud of our *pro bono* efforts on behalf of those unable to afford counsel. We are dedicated to community-based, charitable organizations and provide regular contributions of time and financial resources to those in need.

Consistently recognized as among the best in Florida, we enjoy numerous accolades from top publications including, *The National Law Journal*, *Chambers USA*, and *The Best Lawyers in America*.

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