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**Voices For Children Foundation Celebrates its 25th Anniversary at Annual
Be A Voice Have A Heart Gala**

February 25, 2009-Miami, FL- Voices For Children Foundation, the fundraising arm of the 11th Judicial Circuit Guardian Ad Litem Program, celebrated 25 years of being the one, big difference in the lives of abused, abandoned, and neglected children at its Be A Voice Have A Heart Gala. This year, the organization's most elegant fundraiser was held on Saturday, February 14th at Mandarin Oriental, Miami. Despite the current financial crisis, nearly 300 guests made their voices heard that evening, proving that child abuse prevention is still deeply rooted in our community.

The cocktail hour kicked off with an impressive selection of silent auction items such as a Rolling Stones autographed guitar, a selection of exclusive jewelry items, including a Cartier Tank Francaise steel medium quartz watch, box seats for the Sony Ericsson Open, and more. In addition, guests could also purchase raffle tickets for a Voyage to a "Jewel of the Orient," courtesy of Cathay Pacific Airways. The winner of this magnificent raffle will travel business class, with one guest, to one of the following destinations of their choice: New Delhi, India; Beijing, China; or Bangkok, Thailand.

Blending cotemporary art with philanthropy, those guests who joined Voices' premier giving program, the Angel Society, with donations ranging from \$1,000 to \$10,000, entered a drawing to win a custom portrait by renowned artist Romero Britto. Twenty-six guests joined the Society that night, with one lucky winner soon to have their own custom portrait valued at \$40,000.

As is customary, the program included a testimonial showcasing a story of resilience and love for others, which proves to be one of the guests' favorite moments every year. Equipped with just a microphone and surrounded by his entire family, Sergio Martinez moved the audience to tears when he talked about his and his wife's determination to transform the lives of abused, abandoned, and neglected children. In addition to having two biological sons, the Martinez couple adopted eight children, seven of whom used to be in the foster care system. Despite the many instances of abuse and neglect by those who were supposed to look after them, the only constant in the lives of these children, before their adoption, was their Guardian Ad Litem volunteer, their voice when nobody else would listen.

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Laurie Jennings, the evening's Emcee, graciously followed by thanking the evening's Presenting Sponsors Machado Garcia-Sierra Communications; Mandarin Oriental, Miami; Rose Realty and Associates; and Southern Wine and Spirits. A longtime friend of the organization, Laurie also presented a video, produced by Channel 10, celebrating the first 25 years of Voices For Children and the nearly 25,000 abused, abandoned, and neglected children whose lives have been transformed thanks to the work of the organization.

After the program, guests danced to a fusion of Top 40, Motown, Indian, and Latin beats, provided by renowned DJ Kutcha, until the early hours of Sunday. The exquisite décor and magnificent menu, which included Asian crab cakes with wasabi aioli, seared filet mignon with kimchee and sesame chili sauce, and an indulging dessert trio, added the final touches to an evening that certainly raised much needed funds and awareness in the toughest of times.

The Be A Voice Have A Heart Gala would have not been possible without the utmost dedication of the Gala Co-Chairs Aimee and Stephen Owens and Veena and Ramesh Panjabi. The Gala Committee included Gigi Alibhai, Yngrid Barrera, Marjorie Gouraige, the Honorable Ambassador Carmenza Jaramillo De Maincourt, Sonia Gibson, Jennifer Heegaard, Beth Tasca and Yolanda Berkowitz, who also Co-Chaired the silent auction.

In 2009, Voices celebrates 25 years of being the one, big difference in the lives of abused, abandoned, and neglected children. Be a part of it, visit www.voices4.org.

Voices For Children Foundation raises funds to support the 11th Judicial Circuit Guardian Ad Litem Program in their efforts to provide abused, abandoned and neglected children in Miami-Dade with a voice in dependency court. Additionally, the Foundation raises funds to ensure that financial assistance and other resources are available to meet the children's educational, health and social needs. For more information visit, www.voices4.org. Be a Voice.

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