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Restoration House Gala Grosses over \$65,000 for the Fight Against Human Trafficking

by Britney Hamm

On January 23, 2016, the Restoration House of Greater Kansas City, a residential recovery program for survivors of human trafficking, held its second annual Hope Now Freedom Gala and Honor Dinner. Over 350 people braved the bitterly cold evening to attend the event at the Arrowhead Stadium North Club.

The event began with a silent auction, where guests perused an array of auction items ranging from signed sports paraphernalia and artwork to gift certificates and musical instruments. While mingling and bidding, guests sipped decadent hot chocolate and listened to the delightful sounds of the young but astoundingly talented 5 Star Jazz Band.



Melony McKaye, Morning Host of Life 88.5, acted as the evening’s M.C. The Missouri Army National Guard Recruitment and Retention Battalion Color Guard presented the American Flag as well. While guests feasted on succulent chicken or salmon entrees, Kansas Assistant Attorney General, Christine Ladner, took the podium.



Ms. Ladner spoke with grace, emotion, and compelling passion. She moved guests to tears with real stories of victims her legal team has rescued. She opened their eyes to the shockingly simple ways traffickers prey on victims and the devastating depth of victims’ trauma-influenced bond to their captors. She angered them with the injustices of loopholes allowed by our legal system. She inspired them with the hope that progress is happening, as recent changes in Kansas legislation prove.

Gib Thurman of Thurman Auctioneering conducted the live auction. He was charming, witty, and guilt-trippingly effective as he prodded to raise bids. For the last live auction item, Mr. Thurman auctioned off a custom-made diamond necklace designed by Especially Jewelry. The winner of the necklace later presented it to Christine McDonald, Restoration House’s Program Director, in a beautiful display of God-inspired generosity.

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After the live auction concluded, September Tribble, Executive Director of Restoration House, and Christine McDonald took the stage. Ms. Tribble gave a few remarks of gratitude, exuding her passion for her work before turning the podium over to Ms. McDonald, who herself is a survivor of sex trafficking.

Ms. McDonald left no eye dry as she dedicated five one-hundred dollar bills to five of her friends who died at the hands of pimps, johns, or drugs. Through their stories, she reminded listeners that the harsh street life is reality for far too many people. She compelled them to remember that Restoration House isn't about a cause; it's about real people, with real lives and hopes and dreams. Finally, she dedicated one last hundred dollar bill to hope: hope that these victims can experience healing and restoration.

Dr. Rodney Hammer, Board President of Restoration House, concluded the night with a presentation of the first ever Cry Purple Award. This award, named after Christine McDonald's book, is to be given annually to someone who has shown exceptional efforts in the fight against human trafficking. This year's award went to Christine Ladner for her remarkable work in the Kansas Attorney General's office against human trafficking. Ms. Ladner has advocated relentlessly for human trafficking victims through prosecution of their perpetrators and by working toward legislation that more adequately categorizes the crime of human trafficking and its punishment.



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Christine Ladner with Christine McDonald, September Tribble and Janine Montgomery

Between auction profits and donations, the Gala grossed an astounding \$65,000 for the work of the Restoration House. Beyond providing much-needed funds for Restoration House to continue freeing victims and bringing hope to survivors, something more was accomplished. Every guest in the room was made aware and informed about the realities of human trafficking. With that knowledge comes the challenge to stand up and boldly say,

"Not in our city!"

For more information on The Restoration House of Greater Kansas City, visit www.restorationhousekc.com



Restoration House Staff