

# Fairfield and New Haven Musicians Join Together for Benefit Concerts



Forty boys and girls from the Fairfield County Children's Choir will sing at each concert.

A new collaboration between New Haven and Fairfield County is underway. For the first time, the Fairfield County Chorale, the Fairfield County Children's Choir and the Civic Orchestra of New Haven are presenting joint concerts to benefit the Ronald McDonald House of Connecticut at two locations. The first concert will be held at the Norwalk Concert Hall on Saturday, April 28 and the second at Yale University's Battell Chapel on Saturday, May 5. *Carmina Burana*, one of the most popular choral works of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, will be a welcome addition to the spring's musical calendar.

This collaboration signifies the importance of the House to the entire state of Connecticut. Most of our guest families come from our own state. While families from the immediate area can commute easily to major medical facilities in New Haven, others in the state need to stay at the House in order to be closer to their children. The Caldereri family from Torrington, whose story appears on page one, is a perfect example of the kind of family who benefits so much from the ability to stay near their children.

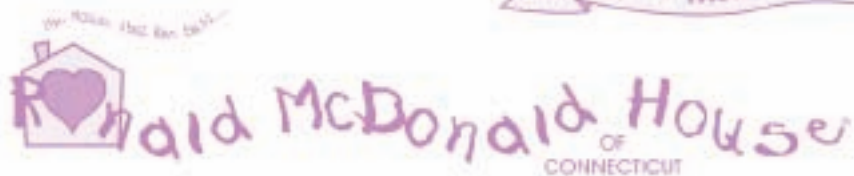
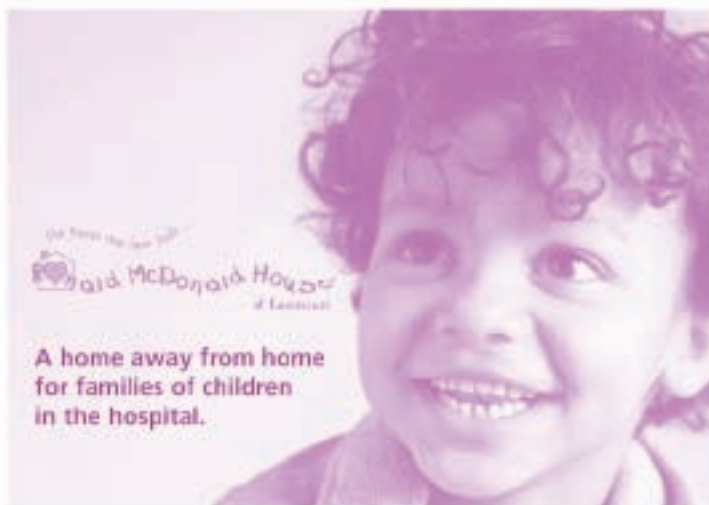
For more information or to reserve tickets, please contact Claire DiMartino at 203-777-5683 or visit our website at [www.rmhc-ct.org](http://www.rmhc-ct.org).

## President's Corner

Lizabeth Haskos



It's a special thing when kids help other kids, and that's exactly what students at 33 schools throughout Connecticut and Western Massachusetts did this past fall. As part of the "Pennies for Change" program, participating children pooled their change to collect more than \$8,500 for the local RMHC Chapter. That money was put toward our grant-making process, and we recently awarded nearly \$85,000 to eight wonderful organizations. In addition, we continue to make quarterly contributions to support the fabulous work being done at the local Houses in New Haven and Springfield.



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## Connecticut Family Finds Solace at the House

*The normal excitement surrounding the birth of twins turned to anxious waiting for the Caldareri family when they received a prenatal diagnosis that one of their babies faced serious heart problems. The Ronald McDonald House of Connecticut provided them a place to stay when they faced a difficult commute from home to hospital.*



*Grandmother Caren Bourdeau (left), Renée with baby Antonio, Jr. (center), and Antonio Caldareri (right) pose for a photo before leaving the House to return home with their new family, including baby sister Gabriella.*

Renée and Antonio Caldareri were eagerly awaiting the birth of twins when they went to their local medical facility for a routine ultrasound exam. They quickly suspected that something was wrong when they were referred to Yale-New Haven Hospital for an echo cardiogram. The procedure revealed that one of the twins, their daughter, had serious heart problems that would require careful monitoring followed by surgery. Hospital staff suggested they could stay at the Ronald McDonald House in New Haven to ease the burden of caring for one twin at home in Torrington and one in the hospital.

The family expected to return home shortly after the birth, where their daughter, Gabriella, would wait a few months for surgery. Nine days after birth, however, complications requiring immediate surgery

developed. Renée and Antonio, along with baby Antonio, Jr., settled into a guest room at the House for the next two weeks.

Staying at the House with her husband, son, and parents to help her was “a life-saver” for Renée. She had been driving 75 miles back and forth from Torrington to New Haven, heart-broken and sobbing, torn between the needs of two babies. “The House made me better,” said Renée. “Staying there was one of the greatest experiences. Being in a place where others had problems and having people to talk to made a difference.”

Grandparents often play a vital role in helping when one of their grandchildren is hospitalized. The Caldareris were fortunate to have help from both Caren and Leonard Bourdeau of Woodbury, CT and Anna and Frank Caldareri from Montreal, Canada. Baby Antonio was rarely left alone, always cradled in the arms of one loving family member or another. The Bourdeaus reached out to other guests as well, bringing in a turkey dinner for all the House guests and offering to provide handyman services. “They just kept thinking of ways to help the House,” said Janet Hanscom, Director of House Operations, “not just while they were here, but for the future.”

The twins and their parents are now home together. Grandparents are there as well, helping care for both babies throughout the day and night. In April, Gabriella is scheduled to return for open-heart surgery. If the Caldareris need our help again, we will be honored to have them return as guests. 🏠

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## SAVE THE DATE

April 28 and May 5

*Carmina Burana*

July 9

22<sup>nd</sup> Annual CKC Golf Tournament

September 18

3<sup>rd</sup> Annual East Rock Run

# From the President: David P. Melillo



It is with great excitement, some trepidation, but mostly a great sense of honor that I begin my term as president of the RMH Board of Directors. The excitement stems from the fact that we have many new and exciting things happening in 2007 and I look forward to working with the board, staff and volunteers to ensure a successful year. The trepidation comes from realizing the enormous responsibility one inherits as I take on this position, to do everything possible to make sure we are meeting our goals and objectives; to continue and expand on the good work that has come before. This brings me to honor. As a long time volunteer at the house, I have seen first hand the extraordinary level of dedication of those that have served

before me, and who continue to do remarkable, selfless work to support the "House that Love Built". Our volunteers all share a common love and commitment to provide the highest level of service to our guest families. It is truly an honor to serve as your president.

Looking back, I offer my sincere thanks to outgoing president Steve Merz, who has guided the House for the past two years. Steve's steadfast support, hard work, and unwavering dedication and compassion have elevated the visibility, recognition and support of the RMH throughout Connecticut.

I would also like to acknowledge and thank outgoing board members Terrence Swain, Michael Apkon, M.D., Gretchen DeStefano, David Garamella, Colette Hanlon, S.C., Joyce Lujic, Cathy Stevens and Robb McCorkle who have each made significant contributions to the success of the House throughout their respective terms.

As we look ahead, I have two major goals for 2007. First is to develop a planned giving and major gifts initiative to generate sustaining financial gifts to the House to insure the legacy of our mission. The second is to work to strengthen and expand the volunteer base of the House. Our volunteers are the "Heart" of the House, and we most continue to both attract a new and diverse base of volunteers, while retaining those who continue to serve, so that we can always meet the needs of our guest families.

I invite all of our friends and supporters to join me as we continue to move forward. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the many individuals, companies, civic organizations, schools and all who make the Ronald McDonald House of Connecticut possible through their generous contributions of money, time and talents. ♥

## Board Member Receives Corporate Citizen of the Year Award from Business New Haven



Board Member Larry Moon was recently featured in the February 5 edition of *Business New Haven*. Larry, president and CEO of New Haven's C. Cowles & Co., has expanded his role in giving back to the community as his business has grown, supporting not only the Ronald McDonald House, but also the Hospital of St. Raphael's, Easter Seals, and undergraduate engineering students at the University of

New Haven. Larry has been personally involved with the House as a member of the Board, where he is on the finance committee and sits with the endowment manager to review the performance of our portfolio. C. Cowles & Co. has also been a major sponsor of the annual *CKC Golf Tournament* for many years. Larry's wife, Shari, also volunteers at the House. Congratulations to Larry and C. Cowles & Co., winner of the Corporate Citizen of the Year Award from *Business New Haven*.

## Directory

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*Director of House Operations*  
Claire L. DiMartino,  
*Special Events Coordinator*  
Teresa J. Yasevac,  
*Administrative Assistant*  
Maria Perez,  
*Housekeeper*

### NIGHT MANAGERS

Jane and Eric Jeuland

### NEWSLETTER EDITOR

Jane Shaw,  
*Development Specialist*

## New Milford Family Pays-It-Forward to the House



Carlos (left) and Monica Gonzalez (center) stopped by the House for a tour and visit with Director of Development and Marketing Mike Rohde (right) on a warm December day.

Pay-it-Forward became a familiar concept following the 2000 movie of the same title. The premise is a simple one: repay the good that has happened to you by doing good works for other people. The Gonzalez family put this concept into action and named the Ronald McDonald House of Connecticut as the recipient of a \$10,000 donation made in the name of the family who purchases their home.

Monica and Carlos Gonzalez, Connecticut homeowners who are moving to Ohio, hoped to set an example for Connecticut residents this December when they decided to donate \$10,000 from the sale of their home in New Milford. They call their campaign Home with a Heart and hope that others selling their homes will donate a portion to the Ronald McDonald House or to another charity of their choice. The donation will be made in the name of the new homebuyers.

“As the old saying goes, home is where the heart is and this is no exception. Our home is much more than the sum of its four walls, which is why we want to give something back to the community that has been a home to us for many years,” said Monica and Carlos. “More importantly, our home will help families of sick children establish a safe and comforting home environment during their time of need.” Monica and Carlos know first-hand how hard it can be when a family faces cancer or another medical challenge. Monica’s father died of cancer and her mother is a breast cancer survivor. Carlos’

mother was diagnosed with lymphoma last year and is now in remission after receiving treatment.

This unique donation came as a wonderful surprise to Director of Development and Marketing Michael Rohde. “The Gonzalez family epitomizes the generosity that keeps our House going,” he said. “It’s a pay-it-forward concept that has already inspired a \$500 donation from a resident of Avon who read the story in a local paper.”

The Gonzalez home is still for sale. You can visit their website at [www.newmilfordhome.com](http://www.newmilfordhome.com) to learn more about the 10-room house which they built in New Milford in 2004. 🏡



### NEW LOCATION AND DATE FOR 2007 GOLF TOURNAMENT

Following a meeting in March, the Special Events Committee announced that the 22<sup>nd</sup> Annual Golf Tournament will take place July 9 at the Tournament Players Club at River Highlands in Cromwell, CT. The committee is excited to offer a championship golf course that has been ranked by *Golf Digest* among the top ten in the state of Connecticut and awarded Best CT Private Course by *CT Golfer Online* six years in a row.

Look for more details and a *Save-the-Date* postcard early this spring.

### 21<sup>st</sup> Annual Golf & Tennis Tournament Winners Announced

#### MEN'S LOW GROSS

Jim Augur, Lou Panzo, Pat Healy, Bill Mecca  
(Anthem Blue Cross & Blue Shield)

#### MEN'S LOW NET

Jeff Meyers, John Haskos, Jay Zoleski, Kevin Hickey  
(McDonald's of Cromwell & Kensington)

Men's Longest Drive .....Doug King  
Ladies Longest Drive..... Judy Young  
Men's Closest To Pin ..... Ed Abraham  
Ladies Closest To Pin .....Rachael Deane

#### TENNIS WINNERS

Kathy Mason and Kate Berges  
Phil Johnson and Rick Ross

# Trees of Hope...Where Every Tree has a Story

Seventy-two trees filled the Long Wharf Maritime Center in New Haven for the 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Trees of Hope celebration. A holiday tradition for many Connecticut families, 1000s of visitors streamed through the hallways to view the imaginatively decorated trees. With musical entertainment, visits from Santa, and a holiday gift boutique, the event attracted people of all ages. Many were eager to take a chance on winning a tree or raffle prize to take home, as shown by the sales of more than 15,000 raffle tickets. This year, a new online auction, spearheaded by Board member Anne Orum, added a high-tech dimension to the event.

Since moving from City Hall to the Maritime Center in 2004, scores of new visitors have been attracted to the event, including many who work in the building and enjoy viewing the trees for ten days during the holiday season. Two groups of co-workers from AT&T, inspired by the display last year and eager to support the mission of the House, organized a friendly competition. Eileen Mastracchio, Pat Purcell, and Jen Braxel from the Wholesale group put together *Fa-la-la-la-mingoes*, a tree featuring pink flamingoes. Sue Kennedy, Tracey Hansen, Maureen Kelleher, and Cathy Pleines of the Information Technology group had a theme also inspired by thoughts of a warmer climate, *Let It Snow...Somewhere Else*. Both groups were winners, though, with each tree raising funds and awareness for the House.

*Trees of Hope* offers a unique way for families to remember a loved one by designing a tree in his or her honor. Many trees are dedicated to children and capture their youthful spirits. A *Doggone Purr-fect Tree* honored a cherished pet. Others honored mothers and fathers, sisters, brothers, friends. One tree this year was dedicated to the memory of Police Officer Daniel Picagli and other members of police, EMT, and fire departments.

Children from scout troops, church groups, and schools decorate many trees. Students from St. Catherine of Siena School in Trumbull, faithful supporters of *Trees of Hope* since its beginning in 1990, returned again with a dozen trees, one from each grade. Other schools participating include the Woodland Regional High School, Cheshire High School, Washington

Elementary School, St. Aedan School, Hamden Hall Country Day School and the Sound School.

*Trees of Hope* remains the single largest source of event fundraising for the House, raising \$63,000 in conjunction with *Lights of Love*. The ten-day event requires a tremendous amount of organization, spearheaded by Special Events Coordinator Claire DiMartino and dozens of enthusiastic volunteers, many of whom return year after year to support the event. 🍷



The Gigolia family from West Haven won the **Lotto Scratch Off** tree donated by the Tirolo and Theisen Family.

## Did you know?

The Ronald McDonald House of Connecticut relies on grassroots community funding for 97% of its operating budget.

## SPONSORS

### PRESENTING SPONSOR

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### GOLD SPONSORS

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Yale-New Haven Hospital

### SPONSORS

C.J. Fucci Construction, Inc.

Connecticut Classic Chevy

Frey-Hershey Foundation

### PRINT SPONSOR

Alphagraphics

### TENANT TREE SPONSOR

Smith and Barney



Honorary Chairpersons Jocelyn Maminta (left) WTNH-TV News Channel 8 Anchor/Reporter and Marna Borgstrom (right) President/CEO of Yale-New Haven Hospital, welcomed guests on opening night.

## SPECIAL THANKS

### COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Merle and David Silver

Patti Gettner

### THE FUSCO CORPORATION

Lynn Fusco, *President*

Mary Woomer, *Facilities Manager*

Barry Vine and

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Vinny's Home and Garden Center

Macy's

### OUR WONDERFUL STAFF AND

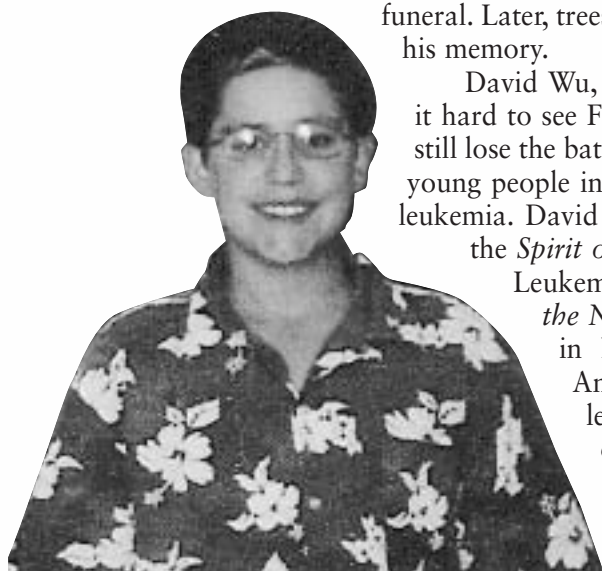
### VOLUNTEERS

# The Seasons of Frankie

Friends and relatives of Frankie Filardo are still mourning the loss of an extraordinary 14-year-old boy. They took comfort in creating a tree in his memory, reflecting activities and items he enjoyed in every season of the year. Snowflakes represented skiing with his cousins, seashells symbolized his love of summer fun with his family, and the angel stood as a symbol of what he meant to his family. The all white ornaments gave the tree a distinctive look among the colorful Trees of Hope.

The family of 13-year-old Frankie Filardo received devastating news on Mothers' Day in 2003. Frankie was diagnosed with acute lymphocytic leukemia. Friends and family were optimistic about his prognosis and hoped that his cancer would go into remission. Sadly, Frankie lost his battle with cancer in October, just seven days after his fourteenth birthday, and only six months from the time of his diagnosis.


Frankie's aunt, Donna Trotta-Linsley, describes "her sweet angel Frankie" as honest, kind, gentle, thoughtful, and genuine. "He was always happy, always smiling, and always willing to help anyone." Frankie was a bright, talented student and a member of the Trinity Boys Choir in New Haven. His death deeply affected his friends in Amity, where school was closed for his funeral. Later, trees were planted on school grounds in his memory.



David Wu, one of Frankie's classmates, found it hard to see Frankie fight the illness so hard and still lose the battle. After Frankie's death, two more young people in his community were stricken with leukemia. David decided to take action, organizing the *Spirit of Amity Team* to participate in the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society's *Light the Night Walk* held at Lighthouse Park in New Haven. David, a senior at Amity High, is now keenly aware that leukemia is the leading cause of cancer deaths for people under the age of 20, and he is working to increase awareness and fund research. David is also contemplating a career in medicine.

"Frankie touched so many people," said his Aunt Donna. His memory has inspired several fund raising events. For example, a golf tournament at the Orange Hills County Club raised \$21,000 for the Friends of Frankie Scholarship Fund, which supports young people who display passion for academic achievement and musical gifts for which Frankie is remembered.

When Donna, her sister Diane, and Frankie's mother, Denise, first saw *Trees of Hope* displayed in New Haven a few years ago they were moved to tears. This year, they decided to participate in the event by donating a tree in Frankie's memory. It was hard to focus on just one aspect of Frankie's life, so they decided to create a tree reflecting many of the things he loved. *The Seasons of Frankie*, quietly beautiful with its white ornaments, embodied the spirit of *Trees of Hope* and stood as a moving tribute to the life of Frankie Filardo.

During the months when Frankie and his family were seeking treatment, they learned about the services provided for families at Ronald McDonald Houses across the country. Frankie's grandmother, Margaret Filardo, has found a fitting way to honor Frankie's memory. "Two neighbor families and my family now provide dinner monthly at the Eastside Ronald McDonald house in Portland, Oregon," she told us. "It is such a wonderful opportunity to give back to those who were willing to be there for my family members." 



## ♥ Wish List ♥

### KITCHEN/HOUSEHOLD/ BATH ITEMS

White Bath Mats  
Queen Size Fitted Sheets (white)  
Twinkle Stainless Steel Cleaner  
Waste Basket Liners (small)  
Garbage Bags (60 gallons)  
Paper/Plastic Cups (3 or 8 oz.)  
Rolled Paper Towels  
Paper Plates (5" or 9")  
Hot Beverage Cups (8 oz., not Styrofoam)  
Liquid Bleach  
Laundry Detergent  
Anti-static Dryer Sheets

### FOOD ITEMS

Individual Frozen Meals, Boxed Cereals, Pudding, Fruit, etc.  
Spiral or Canned Hams  
Canned Tuna or Chicken  
Mayonnaise (small jars)  
Butter/Eggs/Cream Cheese  
Salad Dressings  
Flour/Sugar

### MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS

First-class Postage Stamps  
HP #15 Black Print Cartridges  
HP #78 Color Cartridges  
HP #17 black Print Cartridges  
Rubber Door Stoppers  
XBox Games Rated E  
DVD Movies Rated PG or G  
Compact Fluorescent Bulbs (flood or lamp style, 60 watt)  
Children's Books in Spanish

For reasons of health and safety, all items must be new.



Keep  
Those  
Pop Tabs  
Coming!

# Kids Helping Kids

*Our mission of helping families stay together while children are treated for serious illness is one that resonates with children across the state. We are touched when we receive letters such as these.*

*Dear The Ronald McDonald House,  
Me and my brother have been saving up our money for 1 year. We have \$150.00 for your charity. We hope this money will help the kids of your charity.*

*Maggie and Nicholas*

*Ages 8 and 6*

*Westport, CT*

***My name is Noel and I am 11 years old. In this card I have put a check for seven dollars and 15 cents because my mom said it is not safe to send money in the mail. I made this money by selling 25c home-made cards on my street in front of my house. I have also enclosed a couple of cards made by me. I always put money in your box at McDonalds.***

***I am always making my cards to sell so you will probably hear from me again.  
Love Noel***

10/23/06

From the Girl Scouts of troop 4220, we hope you enjoyed the dinner we cooked you! We certainly had fun making it for you! Thank you for having us. We definitely hope to come back again.

Love, Troop 4220

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## Lights of Love

Schools from around the state help raise funds for the House every year in conjunction with *Lights of Love*. Throughout the school year, students organize events such as book fairs, bake sales, dress down days and dance-a-thons. Sometimes they even give up ice cream for lunch to raise money for other children!

Each school receives a certificate of appreciation, and schools raising \$500 or more are presented with a plaque to display. A committee of volunteers, chaired by Patti Egress, organized a Sunday afternoon party to celebrate the students, teachers, and parents who found creative ways to support *Lights of Love*.

Two students from each participating school, along with their parents or teachers, are invited to the *Lights of Love* celebration at the House in December where they are treated to a great party, complete with food, entertainment and horse-drawn wagon rides. A favorite moment for everyone was the lighting of a 40-foot tree decorated in honor or memory of loved ones. This year, Heidi Voight, Miss Connecticut 2006, joined Ronald and Santa as special guests and the Meriden Theatre Group performed a musical play for the delight of all. Families staying at the House in December joined in the fun, too, as did staff members and volunteers. 🏠



Students from the Nathan Hale School in New Haven presented a check for \$325 to the House.



The choir from St. Mary's/St. Michael's School in Derby performed for other children.



Heidi Voight, Miss CT 2006, and Ronald entertained children and adults as well.

# AROUND THE HOUSE

An innovative gift from **Advanced Office Systems** of Branford will allow guests to read email and use the Internet in the privacy of their own rooms. Instead of splurging on a lavish office party to celebrate their 30th anniversary, Advanced Office Systems in Branford, CT decided to use that money to upgrade our computer system. Having serviced our House for 10 years, they were familiar with our system and eager to help us upgrade. They proposed enhancements that will provide wireless access throughout the House, new PCs and monitors for the staff, and increased security.



*Anthony Buono, Richard Sgueglia and Mark Filiault from Advanced Office Systems (pictured from left to right) stopped by the House to determine our computer needs.*

**Garrity Industries** of Madison has donated \$5,000 to the House. Recently acquired by Duracell, Garrity Industries is known throughout the world for the production of battery-operated flashlights.

**Claire's Corner Copia**, a landmark New Haven restaurant and loyal supporter of the House, donated \$450 from donations collected from canisters on their counters.

**The McDonald's Co-op**, chaired by owner/operator Michael Ghadimian, recently elected to our Board of Directors, has agreed to be the \$5,000 title sponsor for the *3<sup>rd</sup> Annual East Rock Run*.

Sweet Dreams are in order for our guests, thanks to two donations. **Select Comfort**, official provider of beds for Ronald McDonald House Charities, donated 24 pillows and 24 sets of sheets. Volunteer **Ann Chace** purchased McDonalds fabric on eBay and several other volunteers will fashion bed covers from the colorful material.

**The Bridgeport Sound Tigers** donated 12 tickets to a January game. House guests enjoyed the game and came home with plenty of souvenirs. The Sound Tigers also donated a hockey-themed tree that was a favorite with sports fans who attended *Trees of Hope*.



*Shown, from left to right, are Director of Marketing and Development Mike Robde and Board member Steve Merz presenting a sketch of the House as a token of appreciation to Dr. John Levy and Judy Banks.*

There are lots of smiles around the House, thanks to the generosity of dentists from around the state who have supported the House through their fund raising efforts. **The Connecticut Society of Pediatric Dentists** donated \$8,500 and the **Levy Dental Group** contributed \$7,675 from their *Smiles for Life* teeth-whitening program.



*Comedians Johnny Watson (left) and Leighann Lord (right) entertained a full house at the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Dinner and Comedy Night hosted by Bella Notte restaurant on March 3 in East Haven.*

We extend our thanks to our Gold Sponsors, **Bridgeport Hospital** and **People's Bank**, and our Table Sponsors, **Yale-New Haven Hospital**, **B L Companies**, and **Suzio Concrete Company**. Additional donations were made by **Adams Food Stores**, **Bozzutos**, **Carbonella Desarbo**, **Roma Foods**, **Pastry Fusion** and **Norwalk Linen**.