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## Pageant provides fun for good cause

Ten people attend a party and each one donates \$15. What does \$150 do for a charity?

Plenty, says Julie Rahner Hersch, founder of Celebration Donation, a Web-based nonprofit organization that's still in the planning stages. Hersch is well-versed on the subject and more than willing to share her knowledge.

She moved back to Erie in 2006 after 20 years in New York and Dallas. Hersch appears to be following in the footsteps of her parents, Willie and Dick Rahner, well known for their charitable endeavors.

Kara McCormick and Sarah Hemendinger, of Dallas, helped her form Celebration Donation. They hope to have their Web site up and running this fall, free for public access.

It will help those planning a party to share their ideas of raising money for a chosen charity. Hersch believes people will be inspired to raise money at any celebration or social event in a new and exciting way.

As for the \$150, at Heifer.org, that sum will buy a goat that provides milk and income to a struggling family in a Third- World Country.

That same gift helps Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwest Pennsylvania provide 900 meals or helps the Inner-City Neighborhood Art House to purchase 10 children's books.

To help with funding, Hersch hosted a theme party at her home during the live telecast of the Miss USA 2008 Pageant in Las Vegas. About 50 women wore old bridesmaid gowns and tiaras. They feasted and then watched the pageant on TV.

At the start of the evening, guests drew names of states from a hat. Marcy Rahner drew Texas, and when Miss Texas won the pageant, Marcy was awarded a bottle of champagne.

Pageant trophies and champagne also went to Ellen Schaaf Innes, whose state contestant was named "Best Dressed," and to Nancy Bird whose state produced the "Miss Congeniality" winner. The big raffle drawings came at the end of the night, and Maggie Hersch won a four-day weekend at a chalet at Peek'n Peak Resort and Spa.

Denise Verdecchia won a weekend at a lakefront cottage in North East; Mary Payton Jarvie won a weekend at a Manhattan apartment; and Erin Fessler won an iPod classic and \$50 iTunes card.

Others on hand included Anne Rahner, Jeannine Piotrowski, Kathy Dahlkemper, Tara Prischak, Virginia Prischak, Peggy Rahner, Jill Murphey, Lynne Elia, Mary Mulard, Vedrana Miksa, Anne Hardner, Julie Wilson, Brenda Westfall, Kate Maholic, Chrissy Rowane, Julie Minichelli, Jen Brugger, Karen Ducato, Ellen Innes, Aimee Baumann, Helen Agresti, Jen Spellacy, Deana Cacchione and Eliza Peterson.

Thanks to donations from guests, friends and family, Celebration Donation has already raised \$6,000.

All donations are tax deductible. If you want to donate, write to Celebration Donation, c/o Julie

Rahner Hersch, 5127 Walnut Ridge Drive, Erie, PA 16506.

### **Wear your deck shoes**

A swashbuckling good time awaits everyone at the "Pirates of Presque Isle Showcase of Boats" on Aug. 8 at the Erie Yacht Club.

Pirates will be coming ashore to help raise money for Saint Vincent Cancer Care and Research Fund. Guests will enjoy drinks and light snacks while they visit more than 20 of Erie's finest boats, hosted by local captains and crew.

Then they'll gather on the shore for Blackbeard's pig roast, music, entertainment and, of course, a little pirate mischief.

The evening of fun and frivolity is sponsored by Saint Vincent Health System and Saint Vincent Auxiliary.

### **Zoo safari for adults**

Speaking of benefits, intermittent showers didn't dampen the spirits of GalapaZOOza party-goers June 20, nor did it affect attendance at this third edition of the Erie Zoo fundraiser. More than 1,100 people turned out for "Party for a Good Claws," and the food, music and support for the Zoo was again top shelf.

The evening started with scrumptious appetizers under a large tent on the front lawn near the stage, while guests were entertained by the Russian Dance and Music Ensemble, Baranya and Cleveland's Sam Hyman Band.

As everyone visited grazing stations scattered throughout the grounds, they occasionally shared space under an umbrella to taste delights such as heavenly sweet bread pudding dished out by Chef Bertrand Artiques, of Bertrand's Bistro.

Shrimp and crab cocktail were served in a martini glass by LaBonne Vie Steakhouse from Presque Isle Downs & Casino. In the Australian Outback area of the Children's Zoo where kangaroos roam, the Outback Steakhouse served grilled steak, chicken, green beans and a pasta dish.

Who could resist a ride on the carousel at night while listening to the music of the Small Town Rollers? Later in the evening as the rain cleared, the Chosen Few band performed on the main stage, and everyone in the crowd moved to the beat.

Many participants enjoyed getting a close-up look at the Zoo residents, including the penguins, rhinos and one of the giraffes. Others stopped to visit with the orangutan family.

In the silent auction, many bid on one-of-a-kind packages. Erie Zoo Veterinarian P.J. Polumbo won an Amur leopard-themed Alan J. Martinelli artwork entitled "Purrrfect."

Some of the other auction packages included round-trip airline tickets for two to any domestic location, an animal photo collage by Art Becker and a flex- four package of season tickets to the Erie Philharmonic.

Many other unique spa, jewelry, artwork and entertainment packages made it difficult to decide what to bid on. No wonder the GalapaZOOza fundraiser is such a successful event, rain or shine.

Tickets sold out a month in advance this year. Next year's event is June 20, 2009. Mark your calendars and get your tickets early!

### **Interning in theater**

Stephanie Hall gives a thumbs-up to New York Public Theater's production of "Hamlet" at Delacorte Theatre in Central Park. "It was fabulous," she said upon her return from a visit to the Big Apple.

Hall's daughter, Meredith Pompeani, is doing a production internship with the New York Public Theater and worked on this production, which is part of the theatre's Shakespeare in the Park offering. "Meredith is even listed in the program," Hall said.

Pompeani is a 2007 graduate of McDowell High School where her passion for theater design and

production was encouraged by Mike Malthaner, the school's performing arts director. She recently completed her freshmen year at Penn State University Park campus where she's pursuing a BFA degree in theater with an emphasis on design and production.

Pompeani hopes to pursue a career in theatrical lighting design. Her mom is director of communications and public relations for the Sisters of St. Joseph of Northwestern Pennsylvania.

While together in New York, they visited Meredith's godmother, Erie native Donna Quadri-Felitti, and her husband, Pat, who have a home in Greenwich Village. Donna is clinical assistant professor of hospitality and tourism management at New York University.

Pompeani will also work on the Public Theatre's production of "Hair," which opens July 22. It's featured this month in both Elle and Vogue magazines.

POSTSCRIPT: Nothing in life is to be feared. It is only to be understood. -- Marie Curie (1867-1934), Polish-born French chemist. - Source: The Quotable Woman (Running Press).

MEG LONCHARIC's column appears in the Sunday Living Section. You can call her at 454-8000; send e-mail to [newsmeg@aol.com](mailto:newsmeg@aol.com); or write to her in care of the Erie Times-News, 205 W. 12th St., Erie, PA 16534. Please include a daytime phone number.

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