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Barrington and Inverness Couples Honored at WINGS Gala

When Barrington residents, David and Diane Hill entered the WINGS Broadway-themed gala on Saturday, September 9th, they did not know they would become the highlight of the evening. The WINGS gala was held at the brand new Renaissance Hotel in Schaumburg in to support the housing and services WINGS (Women In Need Growing Stronger) provides to women and children struggling with domestic violence and homelessness.

The evening, which began at 6:00 p.m., featured over 80 silent auction items, Broadway tunes by pianist Diana York-Miller, cocktails and raffles. By the time dinner ended, the gala had raised \$95,000 and the crowd stood in ovation to David and Diane Hill of Barrington and John and Rita Canning of Inverness for their amazing generosity to WINGS.

For four years, WINGS has been waiting on construction funding for their emergency domestic violence shelter. The facility was completed and opened despite a funding shortfall of \$675,000 from the state, resulting in the need for a mortgage.

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In addition, WINGS received no operational funds from the state either. In light of these circumstances, WINGS has looked to the community to provide the operational support to open the facility to more women and children.

At the gala, the guests received word that WINGS' angels had arrived. Months ago, Rita Canning approached David and Diane Hill, owners of Kimball Hill Homes, with a very interesting offer. John and Rita agreed to donate one million dollars to WINGS if the Hill's would make the same commitment. And they did. The Cannings and Hills hope that their donations will encourage others to do the same.

It is WINGS' intention to generate donations to establish an endowment fund of sufficient size so that earnings from the fund will cover WINGS operating expenses. Rebecca Darr, WINGS' Executive Director says, "We are so grateful. There are no words that can thank the Cannings and Hills enough for these phenomenal gifts. While we have hit so many roadblocks where government funding is concerned, we have never given up. We still need the construction funding, but these gifts will ensure the future viability of the operations and services that we provide."

WINGS offers transitional housing and emergency shelter. The Safe House, a 15,000 square foot facility opened in January of 2005 and has already helped almost 300 individuals flee from domestic violence. When full, the facility can house up to 45 women and children each night and provides women with medical, legal, and financial advocacy as well as therapeutic counseling and access to housing and other resources.

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In addition the agency has 24 apartments and homes located in Barrington, Chicago, Skokie, Des Plaines, Park Ridge, Schaumburg, Hoffman Estates, Mount Prospect, Arlington Heights, Palatine, which provide transitional housing for over 90 women and children each night.

For more information about WINGS visit www.wingsprogram.com.