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Back to Back Fundraisers Result in Nearly \$500,000 for WINGS

It's been a busy December at the WINGS office. Back to back fundraisers Home for the Holidays and Sweet Home Chicago brought in nearly \$500,000 for WINGS – Women In Need Growing Stronger. The proceeds will benefit WINGS transitional housing and the Safe House which provides emergency shelter to women and children fleeing domestic violence.

Home for the Holidays, held on December 3 at the Chicago Marriott Northwest, was the first to arrive. Almost 300 parents and children flocked to visit with Santa, decorate gingerbread cookies, listen to storytelling, see a puppet show and of course enjoy a delectable brunch complete with a chocolate fountain. Instrumental in determining the success of the festivities was the Barrington Friends of WINGS advisory group. In 2005 they brought in just over \$42,000 for the event. This year that amount surpassed the \$75,000 mark.

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The advisory, headed up by Barrington's Maria Hayes, engaged other Barrington residents including presenting sponsors David and Diane Hill of Kimball Hill Homes, Vince and Pat Foglia, Dave and Katy Pepper, Michael and Susan Hedrick, The Conroy Family and Douglas R. Brown. A host of other sponsors also joined the list providing added proceeds that WINGS will share with their partner agencies including Home of the Sparrow, Fellowship Housing Corporation and HomeAid Chicago.

Hayes, thrilled with the turnout said, "Our group was so pleased to bring this event back for a second year. We truly appreciate the support that Barrington and the surrounding communities have for WINGS. It's this gathering together that makes the holidays really special."

Without missing a beat, the staff and volunteers at WINGS turned around and worked Sweet Home Chicago, another family holiday brunch held at the Four Seasons Hotel Chicago on December 10. This time the party was hosted by Michal and Elizabeth Cole and Jim and Julie O'Connor. The event, which drew nearly 500 guests and brought in almost \$400,000, sold out weeks before invitations could be sent out.

The honorary chairs, John and Rita Canning of Inverness, are long-time supporters of WINGS. The couple has been at the helm of the event since its inception. John Canning owner of Madison Dearborn Partners worked tirelessly with his staff to bring in over 50 sponsors for the event including presenting sponsor LaSalle Bank and lead sponsor, Pritzker Family Foundation.

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Rita Canning said, “I’m amazed at the amount of corporate sponsorships we’ve been able to secure. Many of them raised their level of participation to \$10,000 and \$15,000. Co-chairs Elizabeth Cole and Julie O-Connor did an amazing job of putting this all together.”

Parents and children, dressed in holiday attire, enjoyed a host of activities including gingerbread house decorating, visits with Santa, professional photo sessions and a silent auction. Holy Angels’ Nia Imani Choir and award winning band Ralph’s World provided entertainment for the over 200 children who attended.

Both events are being planned again for 2007.

WINGS currently operates 24 homes and apartments in Chicago and the north and northwest suburbs of Chicago in Cook and Lake Counties including Skokie, Des Plaines, Park Ridge, Mount Prospect, Arlington Heights, Palatine, Schaumburg, Rolling Meadows and Barrington. A 15,000 square foot Safe House can house up to 45 women and children each night. In addition to shelter WINGS provides therapeutic counseling, mentoring, children’s activities, career services, legal and medical advocacy and much more. To learn more please visit www.wingsprogram.com.