

## AROUND THE LAKES: Shields of Honor gala raises \$40,000 for GPD, GFD

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The committee organizing the Shields of Honor Gala included (left to right) Police Chief Matt Colton, Meg Colton, Donna Schaertl, Patti Ciancaglini, Ray Ciancaglini, Erika Van Savage, Jessica Passalacqua, Rob Patnesky, Kelsey Thibault and Fire Chief DeI Parrotta. Missing were Paul D'Amico and Ray Ciancaglini Jr.

Submitted

GENEVA — Ray Ciancaglini still packs a lethal one-two punch.

Last year, Ciancaglini — a former professional boxer — organized two fundraising events, one to benefit the Geneva Police Department and the other to benefit the Geneva Fire Department. Both were successful in their own right, but this year Ciancaglini combined the two into one event, and it proved to be a real knockout.

More than 300 people turned out for the Shields of Honor Gala honoring first responders on Friday, Nov. 3 at Ventosa Vineyards, and the event raised \$40,000 for Geneva firemen and police officers.

Last year's pair of events raised a total of \$26,000, which enabled the GPD to purchase new uniforms for the entire squad and the GFD to buy two \$13,000 up-to-date fire suits. With this year's money, the police department would like to invest in a K9 dog and the fire department again will purchase state-of-the-art fire suits.

At the Gala, speaker after speaker received standing ovations as they praised the first responders and emphasized the need to support them. Ciancaglini, who organized the event along with a committee of volunteers, told the crowd: "I liken first responders to being a seat belt. Seat belts save injury and lives that we never hear about because the seat belt did its job of protecting us from harm. Our police and firefighters are our seat belts every day, unconditionally!"

He talked to the *Finger Lakes Times* recently about his goal for the Gala. "I want to leave this world a better place," he said, "and without our first responders it would not be a better place. I have grown so fond of these young men and women. I love being around them. I admire their courage and dedication. It's a high-risk job and thank God we have them. The least we can do is give them the best equipment."

Erika VanSavage, married to a Geneva police officer and the daughter of a Rochester police officer, was the MC for the evening. Besides Ciancaglini, the sponsor and host, the speakers included: State Sen. Pam Helming, State Assemblyman Jeff Gallahan, Geneva Mayor Steve Valentino, City Manager Amie Hendrix, Police Chief Matthew Colton and Fire Chief Del Parrotta.

"Ray's commitment, coupled with his optimistic perspective on life, is nothing short of remarkable when seen up close," Colton told the *Finger Lakes Times* recently.

Added Parrotta: "Not only is he raising money for first responders, he is raising awareness and support for the people that protect us every day."

Ciancaglini's all-volunteer committee for the event includes his wife Patti, Paul D'Amico, Erika VanSavage, Rob Patnesky, Jess Passalacqua, Meg Colton, Donna Schaertl, Kelsey Journell and his son, Ray Ciancaglini Jr.

"It was many hours of hard work and dedication by my Second Impact committee that brought this Gala to fruition with great success," said Ciancaglini, who also praised Phil Beckley, his public relations consultant, and his drivers Dave Cook and Ed George.

The live auction after the dinner brought in \$16,000. Veteran auctioneer Mike Rusinko sold a Josh Allen-signed NFL football for \$1,600 and an Ali Marpet-signed Hobart College football helmet went for \$2,000.

Ciancaglini has been battling Parkinson's Syndrome and Dementia Pugilistica, now called CTE, for many years as a direct result of numerous untreated concussions suffered during his pro boxing career. He started The Second Impact organization to tell his story of the mistakes he made not properly addressing concussions and the lifelong consequences he suffered as a result. The organization's goal is to raise awareness, offer support and encourage being honest about concussion symptoms. He has lectured for several years at colleges and high schools and to firemen and police on concussions, mental health and overall physical fitness.

New this year at the Gala was live entertainment by the Bobby Greco Band.

To learn more about The Second Impact, go to <http://www.thesecondimpact.com>.