



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 11, 2022

INAUGURAL \$50 FOR FAYETTE EVENT RAISES \$2,550 FOR LOCAL NONPROFIT

Uniontown, PA – One local nonprofit got a couple of thousand dollars richer in the span of just a couple of hours.

Ryan's Tribute received \$2,550 after attending the inaugural \$50 for Fayette event sponsored by Impact Fayette and the Redstone Foundation. The event, held April 28 at Mallard's Landing at Duck Hollow Golf Club, was the brainchild of Mark Rafail.

Following Rafail's guidelines, each local nonprofit in attendance made a donation of \$50, which was pooled. Three of the nonprofits were drawn at random, with representatives from each given the chance to say a few words about their respective nonprofits. Attendees then voted on the three finalists, and the nonprofit receiving the most votes won the money in the pool.

"The concept is, we have a lot of people out there who want to make an impact in our community, and some younger folks who want to make an impact quickly," Fayette County Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Muriel Nutall said.

When the members of Impact Fayette heard Rafail's idea, she said, "We said, 'Cool idea.' And here we are."

Fayette County Chamber of Commerce Board President Devan White said Impact Fayette members are excited about the new event and hope to make it a quarterly occurrence.

"I think people had a great time," she said. "It was your typical networking event, and it had a strong purpose behind it, which made it that much better."

It was an especially good night for Beth Hanzes, the founder of Ryan's Tribute. Upon the nonprofit being drawn as one of the finalists, Hanzes explained that the organization was formed in memory of her son, who was killed in a car accident five years ago. Its aim is to help families who have lost a child, she said. One of the ways the nonprofit does so is by sending "comfort boxes" – care packages filled with such items as candles, essential oils, memory seeds, and postcards allowing family members to choose from a memory bear, blanket or jewelry item, for which the organization pays.

When 13 members of the U.S. military were killed in Afghanistan in August, Hanzes said, Ryan's Tribute reached out to their families through the soldiers' commanding officers. It took three months to gather all of the contact information and coordinate everything, but Hanzes said each family received a comfort box.

"Words cannot describe it. I am just taken aback by the generosity of the whole community and everyone here," Hanzes said upon being declared the winner of the final vote. "It was just awesome.

Even if I didn't win, I would definitely come back. I got to meet a lot of people, and I feel like a lot of these people are doing amazing things for the community."

Another finalist at the \$50 for Fayette event was Team Humanity, which program coordinator Amanda Henry described as a "youth community center in Brownsville." Henry noted the K-12 program is run by Laurel Highlands graduate and former NFL player Will James, whom she said strives to elevate his community through the nonprofit.

"In his heart, that is what he does," she said. "He is bringing back to his community."

Big Brothers and Big Sisters of the Laurel Highlands also was a finalist. Fayette County Mentoring Coordinator Brittany Cooley said the organization serves both Fayette and Westmoreland counties and is a mentoring program for kids ages 6 through 14.

"We have community-based and school-based programs," she said, noting that the nonprofit is in the process of partnering with both Laurel Highlands and Uniontown Area school districts. "(The kids) just get that extra support."

Another youth-oriented nonprofit in attendance was Court-Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) of Fayette County.

"Basically, the goal is to recruit and train individuals from the community to be advocates for children," Program Director Mitch Samick said. "A requirement for us to be involved is (the children) have to have suffered abuse or neglect. They have to be involved with human services and also have judicial involvement."

Samick said volunteers' duties can include going into the homes, meeting with caseworkers, and being a representative for a child in court.

Other nonprofits at \$50 for Fayette were a bit more generalized, including World of Good, which Zelma Kassimer said was started in honor of her late son, Steve.

"It's about kindness, basically. Our son was a gentle giant, literally and figuratively. He was a guy who just had a heart of gold," she said, explaining that Steve would often do things such as paying for someone's purchases if they were short on cash at the checkout. "That's kind of what we're trying to promote, is those random acts of kindness."

She said the nonprofit sponsors blood drives through an initiative called Sleeves up 58 and hosts an annual golf outing in her son's memory. It also sponsors a fishing derby in Fairchance each year.

Other nonprofits nominated at \$50 for Fayette were East End Community Center, Fayette County Community Action, Fayette County Drug and Alcohol Commission, Fayette County Farm Bureau, Fayette Friends of Animals, Hopwood VFD, Interfaith Volunteer Caregivers, Keisterville Community and Youth Center, Miracle League, Salvation Army of Uniontown, State Theatre for the Arts, The Perennial Project and Veteran's Leadership Program.

"I'm very happy with the turnout," White said. "It's hard to get the word out about something that hasn't existed before. Now, people have been here and enjoyed it."

White said she hopes now that they've experienced it, the nonprofits will return, and even more will join the next one, which is tentatively scheduled for late summer.

“I would hope that we have more people every time,” she said. “That’s going to make it more fun because the trick is going to be bigger and the networking is going to be better. The more, the merrier in this case.”

To learn more about Fayette County, visit www.FayetteCountyPA.org.

###

This communication is part of the Fayette County PR Initiative, which is funded through the Fayette County Local Share Account (LSA) and Hotel Tax Grants in cooperation with the Fayette County Board of Commissioners, Fayette Chamber of Commerce, The Redevelopment Authority of the County of Fayette, The Redstone Foundation and other partners. This funding has been designated for the continued promotion and marketing of Fayette County, PA.

For more information, contact Kristi Rooker Kassimer, Public Relations Specialist, at 412-691-0262, kkassimer@fayettcountypa.info or Jamie Rankin, Journalist, at 724-434-4486, jamierankin13@gmail.com.