

ATURE



PHOTO BY CAROLINA MENAPACE

Danielle McNally, from left, Jessica Christensen, Lindsay Ewing, Jenny Pace and Michelle Speziale, all of Clarendon Hills

# A touch of spring

*Clarendon Hills Infant Welfare to freshen up annual benefit next month*

Mike Ellis

The Clarendon Hills chapter of the Infant Welfare Society of Chicago auxiliary (CHIW) is preparing to “light up the night” with a hint of spring at its annual benefit next month at Butterfield

Country Club.

Traditionally held in late January, CHIW pushed its benefit back to April 22 this year as a result of attendance concerns surrounding the Coronavirus pandemic.

“Given COVID, we wanted to give ourselves that extra

time, as end of January would have been a little questionable with comfort-level of attendance,” event co-chair Jenny Pace said. “So moving it to the spring has given us an opportunity to do things a little differently at Butterfield, with some outdoor space,

some different entertainment onsite.”

CHIW vice president Michelle Speziale said the spring timing should be “more pleasant than going out in the snow with your formal gown.”

“I think we’re going to get a really strong turnout,” Spe-

ziale said.

CHIW is among the top annual contributors to Infant Welfare among its auxiliary chapters.

The benefit, generally themed “light up the night,” is the chapter’s largest annual fundraiser, supplemented by

its luminaria sales that illuminate the streets of Clarendon Hills each Christmas Eve.

“Those two really are our revenue-drivers for the Angel Harvey [Family Health Center]...that we’re raising mon-

*Continued on page 10*

## Benefit preview

*Continued from page 8*

ey for," Speziale said.

In 2021, CHIW conducted its benefit virtually, and opened up its silent auction online prior to the benefit, affording members and other virtual attendees to browse prior to the event.

Pace said this wrinkle will be incorporated into the in-person benefit next month. "We're going to keep all of the auction items online to give us more space to socialize," she said.

In the absence of many in-person events since early 2020, organizers expect this year's benefit to be infused with excitement.

"I think this will be a great coming-out party for the community to see people that they just haven't seen in a very long time," Speziale said.

"Especially after the last few years, it's going to be an

amazing time to get together and be able to enjoy that," Pace said. ... "We've still been working hard and doing what we can, but it's been isolated."

Cocktail attire will continue to be the recommended dress, but with spring colors encouraged.

"We're leaning into the spring theme," Pace said. "I think everybody's excited for florals and pastels."

Pat Tomasulo of WGN Channel 9, who performed a virtual skit during last year's benefit, will headline the 2022 event with an in-person routine before dinner commences.

"He was so compelling virtually," Speziale said. "I think to have him there in-person... it's going to set the tone and the vibe."

A doctor from the Angel Harvey clinic will share what services Infant Welfare provides, specifically for the benefit of those in attendance who are not chapter mem-

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**Michelle Speziale, vice president, Clarendon Hills Infant Welfare**

bers.

Given the much later sunset in April, CHIW also hopes to offer an outdoor component towards the start of the event at 6:30 p.m., provided the weather obliges.

"April is questionable around here," Pace said, "but we have the ability to use terraces."

Additional new features at this year's benefit will include wine-tastings provided by E. & J. Gallo Winery and beer-tastings courtesy of Maplewood Beer.

Among the live auction packages are a weekend in Napa, and a local brewery tour and dinner billed as a "guys' night out."

This year, CHIW will also be receiving a boost from its new junior board, a group of local high-school students led by past presidents Suzanne Austin and Elizabeth Lawrence.

Junior board members will be offering babysitting services for parents attending the benefit, and will be assisting with the delivery of auction items.

"They've been directly affecting the success of the organization with their fundraising efforts," Pace said.

All proceeds from "light up the night" will benefit Infant Welfare, which offers a variety of medical services for underprivileged families

in Logan Square and nearby neighborhoods surrounding its Angel Harvey Family Health Center.

According to Speziale, Infant Welfare is currently placing more of a focus on behavioral health, and has recently added more services for speech and occupational therapy.

In the short-term, she said Infant Welfare is hoping to establish a daycare facility inside the clinic, and down the road, it would like to build a bridge to an adjacent building that is currently untenanted, and then expand to offer additional services.

"I think so much of health-care is reactive versus proactive," Speziale said. ... "They're really working on trying to educate the community."

Speziale and Pace said Infant Welfare is also seeking Uber gift cards for those without cars to get to the clinic, particularly in adverse

weather conditions. CHIW currently has a full roster of 50 active members, as well as associate and sustaining members.

"Having your children be able to look up at their moms and see what they're doing, I think that starts another conversation," Speziale said.

The chapter also has a list of guest members that are prepared to rotate onto the active rosters as others transition to associate and sustaining roles.

"I've loved being a part of [this organization], because there are so many smart, successful, talented women in this community that have really gotten together to raise money for a wonderful cause," Pace said. ... "I think it's an amazing way to give back to those that need it."

*For more information about Clarendon Hills Infant Welfare, visit [www.clarendonhillsinfantwelfare.org](http://www.clarendonhillsinfantwelfare.org)*