



LEFT TO RIGHT: Benefit co-chairs and committee members, Lindsay Uthe, Jenny Pace, Jen Alzman, Michelle Speziale, Melissa Woodbury, prepare for a glamorous evening in.

LIGHT UP THE NIGHT

The Clarendon Hills Chapter of the Infant Welfare Society is hosting its annual fundraiser virtually this month, offering individuals and small groups some creative ways to participate in the gala experience—from home.

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ife during a pandemic doesn't have many benefits, but there are a few. If you're one of those people who actually enjoyed staying local and low-key in your jammies over the holidays, you might love what the Clarendon Hills Chapter of the Infant Welfare Society (IWS) has in mind for its January 23 gala.

Like many other nonprofits in the area, the chapter is hosting its annual "Light up the Night" benefit virtually—with a range of options for supporters to create their own experience at home.

Want to ditch the tux and party dress? That's totally fine this year. Maybe you and your small group of friends might want to go for the more informal "game night" option. However, if you're one of those who actually misses having something to dress up for, this is your chance to go all out—with a formal gala option that includes catering packages from Maison Cuisine for appetizers, a four-course dinner, wine, and cocktails. There's even a flower package from English Garden that can make your glummy gala night easy and turn-key.

"The best part of hosting a virtual event this year is that everyone can create their Infant Welfare Benefit fundraiser in the vision that they feel most comfortable,"

explains Melissa Woodbury, who is co-chairing this year's event with Danielle Wheeler. "If you want to get dressed up and have a nice dinner with wine, that's great. But if you're more comfortable with a casual, game night at home with friends while learning about the mission of Infant Welfare, that works too."

In this unprecedented virtual event, participation is open to ... anyone. No one cares what you wear, as long as you show up, follow safety protocols, and help support families in need.

"Maybe you are most cozy next to a fire with a hot cup of tea while you hear and see how the Angel Harvey Family Health Center is assisting families during this

difficult time," adds Wheeler. "What we really want to encourage people to do this year is to participate with the Clarendon Hills Infant Welfare Society benefit in the way that is easiest for them to enjoy, while learning and giving to this great cause."

The longtime beneficiary of the annual fundraiser is the Angel Harvey Family Health Center, an award-winning Infant Welfare Society facility that provides a full range of health care services for Chicago's underserved communities.

"We annually have raised more than \$100,000 as an auxiliary to donate back to the clinic. This year the circumstances are extraordinary, as COVID-19 has had a tremendous impact on the community that the Angel Harvey Family Health Center serves," says Woodbury, who is also vice president of the chapter and has been involved for three years. "Now, more than ever before, the clinic patients are in need of our support, which is why we decided to change up our fundraising approach. We believe that this virtual benefit format can expand beyond the limits of the Western Suburbs of Chicago, bringing greater generosity than ever to this event."

Many of the elements of the annual gala remain the same. There will be the usual raffle and auction, along with "live" entertainment that will be streamed virtually to participants throughout the area.

"Our amazing partners are also supplying unique ways to support these events including multiple in-home catering options, entertainment, and decorations you can buy, which also serve as fundraising opportunities for the clinic," says Wheeler, a three-year member of the chapter. "We will stream content via a link that all ticket purchasers will receive prior to the benefit. The content will include interviews with Angel Harvey Family Health Center staff, families, and volunteers plus entertainment including a wine tasting, cocktail-making segment, and comedy."

Pat Tomasulo, sports anchor for *The WGN Morning News* and local stand-up comedian who frequently plays clubs like Zanies and the Laugh Factory, will be the comedy headliner for the evening. Details on his comedy set as well as a run-of-show will be sent to ticket purchasers prior to the evening so that no one misses the entertainment.

Clarendon Hills Infant Welfare volunteers will deliver food (with reheating instructions), wine, cocktails, and floral arrangements to anyone who purchases those items as an add-on to their benefit ticket (as long as they are within a 10-mile radius to Clarendon Hills). Additionally, everyone who purchases a host ticket will be asked to share the names of those attending their at-home benefit

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LEFT TO RIGHT: Lindsay Uthe, Melissa Woodbury, Danielle McNally, Jen Alzman, Michelle Speziale play poker at a game night gala party.

event to ensure everyone has access to the auction and raffle items.

Woodbury says she is grateful to the many sponsors who stepped up to make some of the more creative additional elements possible, including her co-chair Wheeler—owner and creator of Oakbrook-based Maison Cuisine, an eco-conscious, full-service catering company.

Wheeler is a graduate of Le Cordon Bleu Cooking & Hospitality Institute of Chicago who happens to be a gluten-free vegan, an element she has incorporated into her catering design with allergy-friendly menus. As a result, participants who add the four-course meal or appetizer selection will be able to choose from gluten-free and dairy-free items. Maison Cuisine will donate 15 percent of proceeds to Clarendon Hills Infant Welfare Society.

Similarly, donations from E&J Gallo and Prairie Organic spirits have made the wine and cocktail package available. E&J Gallo will present a virtual wine tasting during the benefit program and Prairie Organic spirits will host a cocktail demonstration.

"English Garden has long been a partner of Infant Welfare, each year creating wonderful flower arrangements seen at our benefit," adds Woodbury. "One of the new ways you can bring the benefit experience into your

home is by purchasing a floral add-on and 15 percent of those purchases will be donated back to Clarendon Hills Infant Welfare Society."

Woodbury, Wheeler, and the rest of the benefit committee invite the supporters from throughout the village to join them this year in supporting this worthy cause. Set against the backdrop of a global health pandemic, rising health care costs, and lack of access to reliable health care centers, the Angel Harvey Family Health Center provides need-based health services for Chicago's at-risk population.

"A simple donation of \$500 can supply 25 children with a dental check-up, \$100 provides three children's physicals, \$75 provides prenatal supplies and workbooks for soon-to-be mothers," added Jen Alzman, president of the Clarendon Hills Infant Welfare Society. "Donations to Infant Welfare can make a big difference to families in our area and by participating in this benefit, you can help ensure that the healing reach of the Angel Harvey Family Health Center is there to support our neighbors in the coming year."

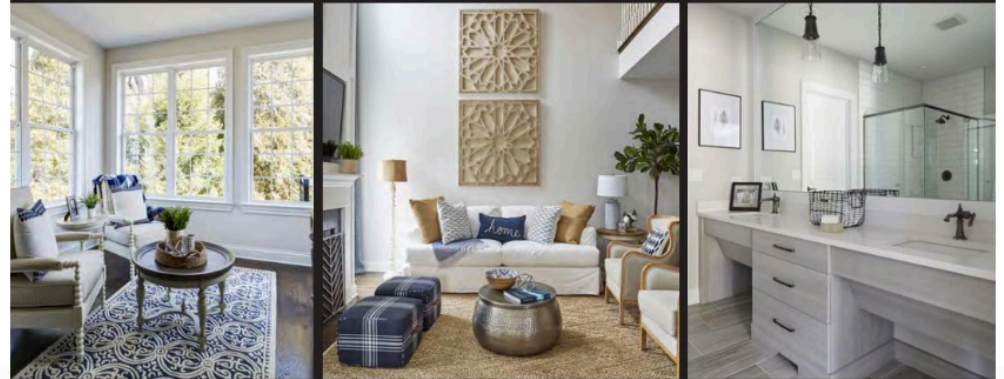
For ticket information and to make your reservations for the January 23 "Light up the Night" gala, visit clarendonhillswelfare.org.

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