



PRESS RELEASE

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Unmasked Gala Shatters Fundraising Goal for Local Nonprofit, Wonders & Worries

Austin, TX – February 28, 2017 – Wonders & Worries, an Austin-based nonprofit that provides professional support for children during a parent’s illness, hosted their third annual Unmasked Masquerade Gala at the JW Marriott downtown Austin on February 24.

This year, the event honored **Meredith Cooper**, co-founder and former executive director, as well as **Shelly and David Bain**, who chaired the gala to new heights of philanthropy success. Presented by **Texas Oncology**, the 400 Unmasked attendees raised more than \$460,000 – the most successful spring gala in the 15-year history of the organization – and nearly double the amount raised in 2016.

“I cannot overstate the value of what the organization did for my family in our hardest, most trying times,” shared Shelly Bain, who was diagnosed with breast cancer when her children were 4 and 7 years old. “Our children processed and adapted, thanks to Wonders & Worries. What they did for us is what they do for hundreds of other central TX families - free of charge.”

The Bain’s daughter, Reese, now 10 years old, also spoke: “Wonders & Worries helped me because I could talk to other kids that were going through the same thing I was, and it helped me understand what my mom was going through. I tried to talk to my friends but they didn’t understand.” At least 15 members of the extended Bain family attended the event to show their support.

The evening featured a festive cocktail hour with extensive raffle prizes, including diamond earrings donated by The Menagerie and a rifle donated by Woods General Contracting. Emcee **Rod Babers**, former Texas Longhorns football player, kept spirits high. **Heath Hale** of Cowboy Auctioneers led a live auction with gusto before **DJ Gatsby** mixed tunes for the afterparty. Live auction highlights included vacation packages for dove hunting in Argentina and private plane ride and fly-fishing in Colorado; exclusive tickets to concerts and events including Lollapalooza and Cubs games; and the heart-warming appearance of “Tucker,” a 12-week-old Borderdoodle puppy.

Also, a surprise tribute video brought Meredith Cooper to tears, featuring some of her first clients and Board members sharing the impact of the organization on their lives. Cooper took the stage to express her gratitude

“from the bottom of my heart.” As a bonus on the memorable night, Meredith’s first granddaughter was born just hours after the event concluded.

Wonders & Worries executive director **Alex Gabbi** said, “I couldn’t be happier with how everything came together for Unmasked. The support we’ve received tonight is phenomenal, and it means we can serve that many more children.”

For more information, contact Penney Berryman, Director of Communications, at 512-329-5757, Ext. 202 or penney@wondersandworries.org.

About Wonders & Worries

Wonders & Worries is the only organization of its kind in the U.S., providing professional support for children 2-18 through a parent’s serious illness. Since 2001, Wonders & Worries has reached more than 6,500 children and family members. All services are free of charge and offered in English and Spanish. For more information, please visit www.wondersandworries.org.

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