



Wonders & Worries

Professional support for children
through a parent's illness.

PRESS RELEASE for Immediate Release

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Sold-out Crowd Raises Record Amount to Support Children with a Sick Parent at Wonders & Worries' Unmasked Gala

AUSTIN, March 1, 2018 – Wonders & Worries held their fourth annual Unmasked Gala on Feb. 23 to rave reviews and record-breaking fundraising. The nonprofit organization provides professional mental health support to children and teens during a parent's serious illness. All services are free of charge.

All told, the event **raised \$540,000 for Wonders & Worries**, the highest amount for a gala in the organization's 16-year history, and nearly \$100,000 more than the previous year.

The top ballroom of the JW Marriott Austin buzzed with the hum of a **sold-out crowd of 500**, bedecked in feathers and masks, taking selfies with larger-than-life floral peacocks designed by **The Flower Girl**.

The number of attendees reflected Wonders & Worries' expansion not only to new locations, but also new social circles. Cardiothoracic surgeon **Brannon Hyde, MD**, co-chair of the event with his wife **Kelly Hyde**, alluded to this, "I see many faces from the medical community here tonight, and I hope we continue to embrace this organization. Wonders & Worries provides the emotional and mental health support our patients and their children need to experience healing for the whole family."

Texas Oncology served as presenting sponsor for the fourth year.

Highlights included **Rapt Aerial Dancers** performing on silks from the ceiling during dinner; the deeply personal video and remarks by the Patton-Goldsmith family; **Heath Hale** leading a live auction bidding war for a private, backyard concert with Drew Womack, accompanied by a side of Franklin Barbeque and Deep Eddy Vodka; former Longhorn football player **Rod Babers**



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serving as emcee; and **DJ Gatsby's** after party with coffee shots and peacock color-coordinated donuts.

Kristen Patton and her husband, Steve Goldsmith, spoke from the heart about their experience as clients, moving the crowd to tears with [their story and video](#). "Our four children were given immediate emotional support, free of charge, during my abrupt heart failure and the sudden death of their grandmother," said Kristen.

"A year later, Wonders & Worries once again supported our kids as I recovered from heart transplant surgery," she added. "We believe every child dealing with a parent's serious illness should have this level of professional emotional support. Our family is grateful beyond measure for Wonders & Worries."

The mystery of **why the event is called the "Unmasked"** Gala emerged as well. It comes from an activity that Wonders & Worries' child life staff created with teenagers. Each teen receives a blank mask and decorates the exterior based on how they represent themselves to the world, while decorating the inside with things they worry about, fear and keep private. By coming to Wonders & Worries, children and teens have an opportunity to explore hidden emotions and have a safe space to process them with trusted adults. Unmasking feelings helps with coping.

Executive director and former client himself, **Alex Gabbi**, reiterated the importance of the community's support in reaching additional families beyond Central Texas, "Tonight is a testament to the resiliency of children and teenagers and parents," he said. "Your donations take us one step closer to every child thriving, despite a parent's illness."

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 a Texas-based nonprofit that ensures children and teens can reach their full potential despite a parent's serious illness. Since 2001, Wonders & Worries has provided professional support to more than 7,000 children and family members during a parent's illness. Programs are offered at no cost to families in English and Spanish. Wonders & Worries is the only organization of its kind. For more information, visit www.wondersandworries.org or follow @WondersnWorries on social media.

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