



Wonders & Worries

Professional support for children
through a parent's illness.

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5th Annual Wonders & Worries Unmasked Gala Breaks All Records to Support Children with Ill Parents

AUSTIN, Feb. 26, 2019 – Wonders & Worries' fifth annual Unmasked Gala presented by Texas Oncology broke all records in the organization's 17-year history.

A sold-out crowd attended the Feb. 22 event emceed by Jenni Lee from KVUE-TV and held at the JW Marriott Austin. Chaired by Kristen Patton and Steve Goldsmith, the Venetian carnival-themed affair raised an unprecedented \$670,000 to support children and teens during a parent's serious or life-threatening illness.

"We're grateful for the opportunity to serve this organization, and both humbled and excited by the strong participation from Austin's high-tech and medical communities this year," offered Kristen and Steve. "Thank you to all the generous guests who give so that children will continue to have access to the critical emotional support needed when a parent faces life-threatening illness."

As attendees arrived, they walked a live red carpet, pausing to gaze up at a 12-foot stilted gondolier, to sip bubbly from a champagne dress and to take selfies in front of a 5-foot floral mask. The trio Cienfuegos played in the VIP area while guests considered raffle packages including a stay at The Four Seasons Nevis, access to the exclusive RM Sotheby's 40th anniversary party, and passes to an upcoming Austin City Limits TV taping.

Venetian carnival characters ushered guests into the ballroom for a multi-course dinner sponsored by Alpha Painting & Decorating Co., Inc., including gondola-shaped chocolate cakes and wine.

"We are honored to have this room filled with people who care about making a difference in



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the lives of children with a sick parent,” said Alex Gabbi, executive director for Wonders & Worries. “‘We will, together’ is more than a tagline.”

Alex also shared the preliminary results of the clinical research trial conducted on Wonders & Worries’ patented curriculum with the University of Texas. “In a word, our program works! And we can prove it,” he continued, acknowledging the two lead researchers in the room, Dr. Farya Phillips and Dr. Elizabeth Prezio. Publication is expected in summer 2019.”

A highlight of the evening was [the Neff family sharing their personal story](#). Kristy is a pediatric nurse practitioner at Children’s Cardiology Associates, and her husband Phil is a pediatric oncologist at Ascension | Dell Children’s. Together, they have a combined 44 years of healthcare experience, but they still needed help talking to their kids, Ella (16) and Alex (12), when Kristy was diagnosed with ovarian cancer.

Onstage, Phil had the crowd laughing before turning serious. He pleaded with the audience to “Please pay it forward for Ella and for Alex, for your friends’ kids, and the kids in your neighborhood and, God forbid, the kids in your own family.”

Moved by the Patton-Goldsmith’s and the Neff families’ stories, Heath Hale and the Cowboy Auctioneers whipped the crowd to a giving frenzy, bringing in more than \$385,000 between live auction and the mission-driven paddles up. Auction packages included a trip to Las Vegas to see Lady Gaga, a romantic week in Maui, a crawfish boil with Drew Womack and an adorable 12-week-old Bernedoodle that found a forever home.

For more information, contact Penney Berryman, Communications Director, at 512-638-5262 or penney@wondersandworries.org.

About Wonders & Worries

Wonders & Worries is a Texas-based nonprofit that helps children and teens reach their full potential despite a parent’s serious illness. Since 2001, Wonders & Worries has provided professional support to more than 8,000 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 wondersandworries.org or follow @WondersnWorries on social media.

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