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2011 Focus Gala 'Cabaret & Cabernet' Raises More Than \$145,000

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New \$10,000 Camp Scholarship Program Becomes Reality in One Evening

Atlanta - **FOCUS**, the Atlanta-based organization serving almost 3,000 local families of children with disabilities or ongoing medical needs, raised more than \$145,000 on Saturday, February 26 during its 28th annual 'For the Love of Children' fundraising event at the Thalia N. Carlos Hellenic Community Center.

"Some 350 guests attended our 'Cabaret & Cabernet' gala event," notes **Kathie Teta**, President of the FOCUS Board of Directors. "They enjoyed live musical performances by Danielle Moore, Randall Sheffield and Elaine Wade, and did some serious wine tasting prior to the sit-down dinner."

Every year, the 'For the Love of Children' event also includes an extensive silent auction, with donations ranging from original art works, luxury vacation packages and signed sports memorabilia to (this year) a one-of-a-kind tiled mirror made by FOCUS kids and a four-foot tall Ferris wheel.

"We estimate that this year, the silent auction alone raised more than \$30,000, thanks to some of our generous FOCUS parents, doctors and supporters who joined us for this event," says **Teta**. "All proceeds of the evening benefit FOCUS programs for children with special needs. In addition, we raise awareness of our organization and the many services we provide."

At the gala, Elizabeth Howell shared her experiences as a FOCUS parent and compared them to the process that goes into the making of a fine wine.

Josh Cusick (25), son of Wayne and Lucy Cusick, drew many laughs with his own 'Top Ten' list of favorite FOCUS activities, including Camp Infinity and the Under the Stars Family Camp. Josh, who was born with cerebral palsy, celebrated the many friends he has made over the years, as well as the great variety of activities that are currently available through FOCUS to many Atlanta children and young adults with disabilities. He was treated to a standing ovation after his humorous speech.

FOCUS was founded in 1983 when two medically fragile children shared a hospital room at then Egleston Hospital for Children. The parents of these children became friends, finding in each other friendship, information and hope. Together, they founded FOCUS to help families cope with the overwhelming struggles of parenting a child with special needs.

Throughout the entire metropolitan Atlanta area, FOCUS now hosts regular Share Groups; workshops; conferences; community respite care; FAST Fins (FOCUS Adapted Swim Team); family days at Six Flags Over Georgia, the Georgia Aquarium, and Zoo Atlanta; and various day and overnight camps, including Camp TEAM, Camp Hollywood, Camp Infinity, and Under the Stars Family Camp. Every contribution is welcome: \$100 helps send a FOCUS child to day camp; \$250 support FOCUS family activities, and \$500 helps send a FOCUS teenager to overnight camp www.focus-ga.org.

Other major FOCUS fundraising events scheduled in 2011 include:

- o Wednesday, April 27, 2011: FORE FOCUS Golf Classic at Bear's Best Atlanta
- o Saturday, August 6, 2011: SummerFest at SweetWater Brewery
- o Saturday, September 24, 2011: Run the Farm for FOCUS 5K Trail Run & 1 Mile Family Walk
- o Saturday, October 22 and 23, 2011: "Spin for Kids" bike ride, supporting Team FOCUS

ABOUT FOCUS

Atlanta-based FOCUS (Families of Children Under Stress) was founded in 1983 to offer emotional, informational and physical support to families of children with disabilities or ongoing medical needs. Currently, FOCUS reaches almost 3,000 families in metro Atlanta through a variety of programs including summer camp, family camp, support groups, community respite, hospital support and family activities. FOCUS serves ordinary families facing extraordinary circumstances, and networks parents who share common experiences and information with each other, providing a sense of community to families with children with disabilities. FOCUS is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

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