

Pegasus Riders Shining Stars

Robin Montgomery, Special to The Desert Sun Published 10:00 a.m. PT Jan. 19, 2019



Cheryl Scarinci Schloss, Heath Scarinci, Kelly Scarinci, Jamie Schloss. (Photo: Nan Burlingame/Special to The Desert Sun)

Pegasus “Special Needs” kids and their families entered the Renaissance Hotel Indian Wells ballroom for the 24th Riders Awards ceremony to behold twinkle lights, Poinsettias, giant decorated Christmas trees reflected in mirrors, and enormous lit stars. Santa waiting in his giant golden chair with bags of candy canes, the smell of cinnamon, nutmeg and fresh baked cookies wafted in the air to complete this wonderland.

In the reception area, **PetSmart's** costumed dog was dancing around tables filled with 600 animals for Pegasus kids and their siblings. **Kevin Marshall**, Pegasus Volunteer Coordinator and **Curtiss Perry**, Treasurer, arranged this piece of magic.

The Renaissance Hotel is famous for its ballroom food and the luncheon did not disappoint.

Pegasus invites all of their clients and families to attend this luncheon at no cost to them. The event honors the Pegasus "Special Needs" Riders. The families got to see their kids receive an Olympic type medal for their bravery and horsemanship during Equine Therapy, all underwritten by **The Angel Family Foundation**.

Chase Berke, COO of Equine Therapy Program, chaired the event along with her Event Producers/ Board Members **Leanna Bonamici** and **David B. Sullivan**. **Dan McGrath** hosted along with **Alicia Gomez** who translated everything in Spanish and then went out into the audience to give all the Pegasus Rider's Mother's a Christmas wrapped box of chocolates and a small gift, courtesy of **CVS**.

Harold Matzner generously underwrote the cost for close to 100 of the Pegasus kids who attended. Additional help came from **Charlie Paglia**, **Kay Hanson**, **Phyllis Eisenberg**, **Nick & Ruby Quaranta**, **Michael Ruvo**, **Peggy Cravens**, **Rita Smith**, **Alice Hand**, **Gayle Hodges**, **The Donegan Burns Foundation** and so many more.

Michael Capitanelli, DJ extraordinaire, had everyone on the dance floor swaying to his incredible song list.

As things got hopping, in walked 22 Marines in their dress uniforms. They were greeted with a standing ovation as they began to help Pegasus kids on the dance floor. If a client could not walk, a Marine carried them. If they could not dance, a Marine held them in their arms and danced with them. Many a guest had tears in their eyes watching these defenders of our country tenderly interact with the children.

The kids weren't the only ones having fun. Pegasus Legal Officer **Carl Orbourne** and artist wife **Janice Osbourne** were seen doing the Macarena on the dance floor. The holidays do bring out the best in all of us, especially at the Pegasus Riders Award Event.

Chase Berke presented the Rider of the Year Award to **Fiona Shoemaker**, and Family of the Year Award went to **The Kontaxis Family**. **Dr Euthym Kontaxis** accepted the award in behalf of his son **Nicholas**, born with a seizure disorder. He gave a lot of credit to the Pegasus Equine therapy Program for helping his talented artistic child.

Representing the Special Ed Programs in Coachella Valley schools were **Dr. Jessica Houghton**-Coachella Valley Unified School District-Special Education, **Mary Perry**-Public Relations/Desert Sands Unified School District with husband **Ed Perry**, **Nan Burlingame** -Chair-Art Department Cathedral City High School, Advisory Board Pegasus. Others attending the event were **Jennie Rayner**, Executive Director Act For MS, **Ann Greer**, **Gayle Hodges**, **Bonnie** and **Kurt Campbell**, **Kelly** and **Heath Scarinci** with **Cheryl Scarinci Schloss** and **Jamie Schloss**.

Pegasus next fundraiser is a joint adventure with Xavier College Prep., an audience interactive Irish reception dinner honoring "Patrick and Bridget" March 16, 2019. For information call David at 760-327-2353

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