

CELEBRATIONS

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Foundation raises \$70,000 for kids

Agency helps those who have cancer

BY KAREN A. DIAZ
STAFF WRITER

The second annual Jessica June Children's Cancer Foundation Fancy Jeans Cocktail Party brought in \$70,000 to help children with cancer, more than tripling the amount raised last year.

"The continued growth of the foundation and the Fancy Jeans event is very exciting," said **Sandra Muvdi**, the foundation's founder and president. "So

many businesses in our community along with numerous volunteers have believed in us, poured their resources and seen us blossom."

Muvdi founded the organization in honor of her daughter **Jessica June Eiler**, who left school early one day in October 2003 with what seemed like a cold. Within a week she was diagnosed with leukemia, fell into a coma and died four days later.

Since then, Muvdi and her foundation supporters have helped many underprivileged children who have cancer.

A recent example is **Brenert Onetti**, 8, of Peru.

Earlier this year, his father

was arrested on charges of illegally working in Miami to try to pay for his son's bone marrow transplant.

"So many underprivileged children with cancer in our community fall through the cracks during the worse possible time of their lives. JJCCF wants to be there for them as they courageously fight so many obstacles that accompany the life-threatening illness of childhood cancer," Muvdi said.

Brenert, who now lives in Coral Springs, underwent a bone marrow transplant over the summer. He announced the raffle winners at the event.

"I hope all of you will

continue giving to the JJCCF so children like me can receive help," he said.

Muvdi also honored young volunteers with plaques.

"I absolutely love the fact that each year more children have wanted to get involved as volunteers," Muvdi said.

Virginia Shuman Young Elementary School student **Nicholas Rodriguez**, 11, of Fort Lauderdale, won the Puerto Rico Escape for Two during the raffle.

Nicholas' mother, **Tadji Rodriguez**, also a teacher at the school, said she became involved with the foundation to teach her sons the importance of giving. "This was a great

cause and great way to teach them about being part of the community and helping out," Rodriguez said.

For Rodriguez, the event reminded her of her college days when a dear friend lost his battle with cancer.

He was being treated at a children's cancer hospital.

"It was shocking to see how many children, especially infants, had cancer.

"You always say you are going to do something, then you get busy, so when Sandra called me, I knew [it was time to get involved]," Rodriguez said.

For more information, visit www.JJCCF.org or call 954-593-5603.