



SUN SENTINEL CHILDREN'S FUND HOLIDAY CAMPAIGN

Editor's Letter: The art of giving (and getting back)

When we began planning this issue, it was 85 degrees outside. Needless to say, the warm weather didn't propel our brainstorming sessions about the holidays. So I took the liberty of purchasing garland and other holiday-themed décor to decorate the office to get us in the spirit. I doubt it was the tinsel decorating our storyboards, but we got to work.

Researching, we've compiled Scene & Be Seen pictures from recent holiday-lighting events and nonprofit holiday parties. And, in continuing with tradition, this is the third year that the Society team selected a cause that's close to our hearts. On p. 18, you'll find a feature on how nonprofit organizations will be spending the holidays with their in-house clients. And on p. 40, we've profiled local philanthropists and asked them to share how they've chosen to give back to our community this season. This year, the calendar includes an additional page of holiday events where you'll find many festive options for you and your family.

A new piece on p. 30 includes a comprehensive list of places to donate old or new items, which may grant a holiday wish for an underprivileged young woman to attend prom or allow a struggling family to purchase previously owned furniture to better outfit their home.

While the season (and this issue) is about giving back, we're all for a good party, so if you're planning an event or attending one, we did the research to make your shopping list effortless and elegant. And in the vain of alleviating your shopping concerns, you'll find the ultimate gift guide for giving and giving back (see p. 36). Each item in our guide gives back to the community in some way. These are just a few of the departments we've launched for our annual holiday season in hopes of expanding them in the years to come.

As the temperature here finally began to dip into the 70s and even 60s on a couple days, we were finally in the holiday spirit and were ready for our cover-photo shoot. The cover story (p. 44) features organizations that are benefited by our own Sun Sentinel Children's Fund, which provides grants to organizations in need. Therefore we selected one of the nonprofits our fund helps, Jessica June Children's Cancer Foundation (JJCCF), to feature on the cover. In an attempt to create a holiday-themed cover, we chose the festive snow mountain that is one of the main attractions of "Christmas on Las Olas" each year. And so the scene was set: half-completed snow mountain, nine patients of JJCCF, their siblings and family members, and holiday-themed headwear, such as reindeer ears, Santa hats, candy-cane headbands, etc...

The Las Olas Association, who hosts the event, had graciously arranged for us to enter early for our shoot to be completed prior to the start. But a Society cover photo shoot for a special issue wouldn't be complete without nerve-racking and uncontrollable kinks to alter the plan. In short, the snow machine had an untimely incident, causing the final product to be delayed. Needless to say, the JJCCF children who had been waiting 90 minutes weren't the only kids eager to play in the snow. It was clear we had some competition.

In hindsight, I'm surprised that I didn't give up but I had a team of photographer Kara Starzyk, Assistant Society Editor Ashley McCredie, and colleague Mary Helen Olejnik, who are also notorious for accomplishing a project no matter what challenges should arise.

While the mayhem ensued, the JJCCF children patiently sat to the side as the snow machine shot ice out at 60 MPH. When the ice machine had finished its masterpiece, we attempted to finish ours. But it wasn't easy (hence the reason some of the kids may not be looking at the camera). By now we had drawn a crowd of more than 100 onlookers (approx. 75 of which were other children who weren't pleased they couldn't be first in the snow). Nonetheless, the entire experience was a beautiful disaster.

At the end of the photo-shoot, we huddled with the kids and their families on Las Olas Boulevard distributing wrapped presents that Mary Helen had generously brought for everyone. The children were thrilled, and while they shared gratitude for their new toys, I couldn't help but later reflect that they had given me one of the greatest gifts I've received: A lesson of strength, patience and humility.

P.S.: I'd like to thank the patients who were darling and well-behaved models, and just as important I'd like to thank the employees of JJCCF and all the parents and siblings. And of course, thanks to my rock-star team, Florida Ice, Happy Holidays Christmas Trees and everyone else who helped make it all happen. Happy holidays from Society Scene!



Society Scene Editor, Meredith Clements



44



On the cover:

Cover: Sarahia Jarquin, front left, Tyler Harrison, Xiomara Rodriguez, and Daniela Valenzuela; Kevin Jarquin, back left, Kareem Rhiman, Brandon Bustos, Gabriel Carde, Marlon Bustos, and Daniel Jaramillo from Jessica June Children's Cancer Foundation (photo by Kara Starzyk)



Xiomara Rodriguez, 5; left, Daniela Valenzuela, 3; Kareem Rhiman, 7; Marlon Bustos, 10; Sarahia Jarquin, 4; Kevin Jarquin, 9; Tyler Harrison, 7; and Brandon Bustos, 6, from Jessica June Children's Cancer Foundation pose at "Christmas on Las Olas."