

SOCIETY

Scene

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STAR DATE

JESSICA JUNE'S CHILDREN'S CANCER FOUNDATION

JJCCF 'STAR Date'

Child cancer patients treated to shopping spree, kiddie cocktails, Mai-Kai show and more



Elijah Barrios, 11, with his mother Lillian Barrios walk into Blue Martini Fort Lauderdale for kiddie cocktails.



Angel Nazario, 4, who is fighting brain cancer, holds a teddy bear provided by the Museum of Discovery & Science.



Lourain Cahaw-McNabb, 7, leads Claritza Claudio into Blue Martini Fort Lauderdale.

On May 31, Jessica June Children's Cancer Foundation (JJCCF) held "STAR Date." The day started at 2 p.m. at Broward General Medical Center with photographs taken with the pediatric oncology team before departing on a stretch Hummer limousine to hot spots in Fort Lauderdale. Stops included the Museum of Discovery & Science, Blue Martini for a "Kiddie Cocktail Party," Dillard's for a shopping spree, Neiman Marcus, Godiva for sweet treats and concluded with dinner and a show at the Mai-Kai restaurant.

"The 'Star Date' was a

magical day we will always remember," said Sandra Muvdi, president and founder of JJCCF. "All participating children and family members have received JJCCF's emergency financial assistance and are still undergoing cancer treatment, but they were all smiles during the special day. Projects like this offer our children a respite from battling a life-threatening illness and give them a chance to enjoy a fun time with their fellow patients, families and siblings."

Dillard's surprised four of the cancer heroes with a shopping spree, where each child picked an outfit of their choice. Cara

Dennis (a 4-year-old fighting neuroblastoma at Chris Evert Children's Hospital) picked out her future white wedding dress. Lourain Cahaw-McNabb (a 7-year-old fighting leukemia at Chris Evert Children's Hospital) picked out her bridesmaid dress. Elijah Barrios (an 11-year-old fighting bone and eye cancer at Jackson Memorial) picked out a preppy pair of jeans with a Polo shirt; and Angel Nazario (a 3-year-old fighting brain cancer at Joe DiMaggio Children's Hospital) was the first to complete his spree with shorts and a T-shirt in his favorite color, brown.

"I liked going to Dillard's the most! I can't wait to show my two older sisters my new wedding dress," said Dennis.

The children were treated to front row seats at Mai-Kai for a dinner and show. After the show, the kids were invited to go on stage to practice new dance steps with the performers as the audience clapped. At 11 p.m., the STARS returned to Broward General Medical Center. There were 17 "STAR Date" participants, who quickly became a big family while joking and dancing throughout the respite day. The fun date represented a wonderful escape from the day-to-day task of

fighting a life-threatening illness.

"My favorite was the museum bubbles and the fire dancers at the Mai-Kai," said Barrios.

The "STAR" date was introduced as a spinoff to a promise made to the children who were recognized at the past "STAR" event in March. JJCCF's second annual "STAR" event was held to recognize those who contributed to the organization during 2010.

"The whole day was wow. Seeing all the children enjoying themselves and bonding was my favorite part," said Craig Dennis, Cara's dad.

Founded in 2004 by Muvdi, JJCCF's mission is to provide emergency financial assistance for children fighting cancer to ensure access to basic human necessities during their struggle. Muvdi founded the organization as a tribute to her only child, Jessica June Eiler Muvdi, who lost her battle with leukemia in 2003. The Foundation operates out of Broward General Medical Center in Fort Lauderdale and serves the patients of all seven hospitals treating pediatric oncology in the South Florida tri-county area.

For more information about the JJCCF, visit www.JJCCF.org.





Museum of Discovery & Science Manager of Special Events Ethel Lipoff gives a teddy bear to Cara Dennis, 4.



Lourain Cahaw-McNabb and friends enjoy kiddie cocktails at Blue Martini Fort Lauderdale.



Claritza Claudio, left, and Broward General Medical Center Drs. Rudolph Roskos and Hector Rodriguez help Cara Dennis, Lourain Cahaw-McNabb, Angel Nazario, and Elijah Barrios, into a Hummer limo.



Angel Nazario, left, Sandra Muvdi, Cara Dennis, Lourain Cahaw-McNabb, and Elijah Barrios, with Drs. Rudolph Roskos and Hector Rodriguez. "This is the first year JJCCF is doing STAR Date. The mission of the date is to bring big smiles to these children and their families. Most of the families that we assist have one or both parents who have lost jobs, qualifying the family for Medicaid. The foundation helps the families with everyday needs such as utility bills, medical expenses, car payments, and groceries. Last year, JJCCF helped 84 children and their families," said Muvdi.