

AUDREY'S SOCIETY WHIRL



By Audrey J. Bernard
Lifestyles & Society Editor

More than 250 guests from the worlds of television, publishing, and the health care industry recently attended the 11th annual Reach Out and Read of Greater New York (ROR GNY) gala at the tony Tribeca Rooftop to support children's literacy. Amy Robach, the Saturday co-anchor of Today Weekend Edition and correspondent for NBC Nightly News, emceed the event to promote literacy.

Themed "Celebrate the Communities of Reach Out and Read of Greater New York," the evening kicked off with a lovely cocktail reception and silent auction hosted by ROR GNY's distinguished board of directors followed by dinner, live and online auction and awards ceremony. Proceeds from the event will benefit children in the New York City region served by Reach Out and Read.

During dinner the organization paid tribute to David & Marilyn Sanchez, an exemplary family that know the importance of reading to their children. Their poignant story caused a bidding frenzy during a live auction manned by auctioneer Patrick Tully.

Each year, ROR GNY bestows its coveted Literacy Champion Awards to literary giants - people who believe in the adage, "reading is fundamental." The 2010 Literacy Champion Awards were presented to Megan Tingley, senior vice president and publisher of Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, Hachette Book Group, and Kim Wayans and Kevin Knotts, actors and authors of the award-winning kid's book series "Amy Hodgepodge."

The awards were presented by Keith Dawkins, general manager, Nicktoons Network and senior vice president, programming partnerships, Nickelodeon, who also served as event chair. Jack E. Pace III, Esq., partner, White & Case, LLP, served as benefit committee chair. Emma Walton Hamilton and Stephen Hamilton and NYS Senator, the honorable Suzi Oppenheimer, served as honorary chairs. Susan Kaufman, editor, Time Inc.'s *People Style Watch* spearheaded the auction activities.

In keeping with ROR GNY's theme, "Celebrate the Communities of Reach Out and Read of Greater New York," this year's event also recognized Reach Out and Read programs in hospitals and health centers from diverse parts of the region and emphasized the importance of Reach Out and Read to the City's many distinct communities.

11th Annual Benefit

Reach Out and Read of Greater New York promotes literacy



Amy Robach, Susan Kaufman



David & Marilyn Sanchez



Dr. Sabrina Martin, Sarah Martin, Monique Hardin Cordero



Amy Robach and her husband Andrew Shue



Karine Apollon, Shawn Williams



Kevin Knotts, Kim Wayans, Amy Robach, Megan Tingley, Traci Leter, Keith Dawkins



Eileen FitzPatrick, Mardee Kravit, Andrea DuBois



Mary Ann Hoberman, Megan Tingley

"Tonight we honor the hospitals and health centers that form the web of community support for the 265,000 families annually served by ROR GNY," stated Maria Gotsch, chair, board of directors. "These community institutions are the foundation of our success. Without their participation, thousands of children would be unprepared for school."

Honorees included: Beacon Christian Community Health Center, Bedford-Stuyvesant Family Health Center, Brownsville Multi-Service Family Health Center, Elmhurst Hospital, Lutheran HealthCare, The Mount Sinai Medical Center, New York Presbyterian, Queens Hospital Center, The William F. Ryan Community Health Network, Sound Shore Medical Center, St.

Barnabas Hospital, and Stony Brook University Medical Center.

ROR GNY which has a strong presence in all five boroughs of New York City, as well as the surrounding counties serves more than a quarter million children in hospitals and health centers throughout the greater New York City region. ROR GNY's executive director Traci Lester credits the program's success to the dedication of the "champion" physicians who work directly with families.

"We know that parents trust their pediatricians and the advice they give. Many parents are surprised to learn that reading to a child, even as young as 6 months old, can help that child develop important language

skills," stated Lester. "Our doctors reinforce the critical role parents play in preparing their children to learn."

In 2009, ROR GNY distributed 425,000 books to children at 181 ROR clinical locations throughout New York City, Westchester, Putnam, Rockland, Dutchess, Orange, Sullivan and Ulster Counties. Its mission is to make literacy promotion a standard part of pediatric primary care so that children grow up with books and a love of reading.

ROR GNY is affiliated with Reach Out and Read, which prepares America's youngest children to succeed in school by partnering with doctors to prescribe books and encourage families to read together. Doc-

tors, nurse practitioners, and other medical professionals incorporate Reach Out and Read's evidence-based model into regular pediatric checkups, by advising parents about the importance of reading aloud and giving developmentally-appropriate books to children.

The program begins at the 6-month checkup and continues through age 5, with a special emphasis on children growing up in low-income communities. Families served by Reach Out and Read read together more often, and their children enter kindergarten with larger vocabularies and stronger language skills, better prepared to achieve their potential. Reach Out and Read serve 3.9 million children nationwide. For more information, visit www.reachoutandread.org.

(Photos by Lori Hedinger)