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Hearts & Hands Gala Raises a Record \$480,000 To Benefit Connections School for Autism

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla., March 8, 2023 – Local autism advocates helped raise \$480,000 at the sold-out 7th Annual Hearts & Hands Gala in February 2023 to benefit the Connections Education Center of the Palm Beaches, a nonprofit school for students with autism and related disorders.

Attendees enjoyed a cocktail reception, live music from students at the Lynn University Conservatory of Music, dinner, dancing with the Krush Party Band, a silent auction and a celebration of the progress students are making while attending Connections. The event featured WPTV’s Michael Williams as the master of ceremonies and a moving recognition of this year’s special honorees who have made significant contributions to the school’s mission of empowering students and young adults with autism. Honorees included Debra Johnson of Wellington, Florentino Ortiz of Royal Palm Beach and Rooney’s Golf Foundation. The event was held at the National Croquet Center in West Palm Beach.

Proceeds from this year’s gala will help fund the school’s one-of-a-kind aquatic program, which is designed to combat the high rate of drowning among children with autism. The school’s aquatic program is specifically adapted for children with autism and has been recognized as a model by statewide autism experts. Connections includes swim lessons in the curriculum for all students.

Gala proceeds will also help fund the school’s full array of academic and therapeutic programs for students ages 3-22 as well as the Connections program for young adults with autism who have aged out of the school system and need a structured program.

“It’s incredible to see the growing support for Connections,” says Debra Johnson, Executive Director and Principal of Connections. “Every day, our students work so hard to gain new skills and abilities, opening the door to more possibilities for them and their families. We’re grateful for the community’s support so that we can continue this important work.”

To learn more about Connections, go to www.connectedpb.com.

About Connections

Connections is a nonprofit educational center that delivers high-quality, specialized instruction to students with autism in Palm Beach County. They serve students ages 3-22 years and offer an innovative program for young adults with autism. Learn more at connectedpb.com.

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