

BAYVILLE EMBRACES "BAY'S BIG BASH"



(Back row, from left) Mike Ryan and Alice Lovegrove with their children Bailey and Katie Ryan (missing from photo: Lindsey Ryan) with (front row, from left) celebrity guests Mr. Met, comedian Jackie "The Joke Man" Martling, NY Knicks superstar John Starks and Olympic skater Emily Hughes at the 5th annual Bay's Big Bash - "A Celebration of Life" in Bayville on Saturday, June 30th. (Photo by Criblez)

by David J. Criblez

Bayville resident Bailey Ryan is a cancer survivor who now at the age of 10 realizes his journey and how fortunate he is about the positive direction it has taken. Every year his parents hold Bayville's biggest and most elaborate fundraiser for Winthrop Hospital's Cancer Center for Kids, which helped Bailey and his family through their difficult time. The 5th annual Bay's Big Bash - "A Celebration of Life" drew over 500

people to the Ryan/Lovegrove home on Saturday, June 30th featuring multiple raffles, silent and live auctions, live music, children's entertainment, a buffet by Carlton on the Sound, a professional fireworks display by Bay Fireworks and special celebrity appearances by New York Knicks superstar John Starks, comedian Jackie "The Joke Man" Martling, Olympic skater Emily Hughes and New York Mets mascot Mr. Met. The event raised over \$60,000.

Bailey's mom Alice Lovegrove

works all year long with her husband Michael Ryan and a committee composed of family & friends to put the event together. "We do it year after year because it's a reminder of what we've been through and how thankful we are that things turned out the way they did. We fully believe it was because of the Cancer Center for Kids. If it wasn't for that group of doctors who took such extreme personal care of our child we wouldn't be in the situation we're in today," said Lovegrove. "It's a time of

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reflection for us. We get caught up in the planning of it but there is always a moment where we say 'Thank God we are doing this.'

Linda Sweeney, Practice Manager of Winthrop Hospital's Cancer Center for Kids, was overwhelmed by the size of the event and the outpouring of support the Bayville community provided for the Cancer Center for Kids. "All of the funds raised here today go directly to our psycho-social programs which provides a psychologist, a social worker and a child life specialist for the Cancer Center for Kids, which is not paid for by the hospital or the government," she told the crowd from the band stage. "Every day I go to work and I'm humbled by the staff and what they do for the center. Thanks to all of you for doing this. It's unbelievably heartwarming." This event is one of seven fundraisers held throughout the year in order to raise \$500,000 to pay for the services of a child life specialist, a social worker and a psychologist.

Lovegrove feels her son Bailey is coming to grips with the true meaning of the event. "Bailey is at the age where he is recognizing that his journey was different from other people. He's acknowledging the experience of being a cancer survivor," said Lovegrove, who noted that Bailey participated in "Relay for Life" at Locust Valley High School last month.

When speaking with Bailey, he immediately recognizes that the event means a lot to him. "I was one of the lucky ones," he said. "My mom and dad were always right next to me the whole time." His message to those children who are still battling cancer at the center is to stay strong. "Be good and listen to the nurses," he said. "Don't stop fighting. You'll get through it."

As people came to the event they bought tickets for a 50/50 raffle, a golf cart raffle and a raffle for a Wii video game system. There were 90 baskets for the Chinese and gala auctions as well as a silent auction and a live auction featuring such items as a skating session with Sarah and Emily Hughes, an autographed lithograph of Billy Joel's "River of Dreams" album cover, a pair of orchestra seats to "Jersey Boys," a three-hour cruise on the oyster sloop *Christeen*, a week vacation in a Florida condo and more. The biggest item came last-minute as John Starks was kind enough to offer a golf foursome at an exclusive country club with Starks plus dinner with him at Bryant & Cooper.

Local bands Crocked Foot and the Tommy Gunn Band performed at the Town of Oyster Bay swimmobile on the property as people dined on lobster tails, mussels, clams, barbecued chicken, sausage & peppers, hot dogs and burgers provided by the Carlton on the Sound, who hosted half of the party on their property next door to the Ryan/Lovegrove home. Gooseberry Grove offered cotton candy, sno-cones and popcorn as well as inflatable slides and games along with Inflatables by Marty. There was also a dunking booth from Magical Productions set up where Mike Ryan and 5th grade teacher Bill Calandra got dunked multiple times in good fun.

Former New York Knicks guard John Starks came to the event to sign basketballs and talk with members of the crowd. Currently he works with the Knicks organization in alumni relations where he keeps former players involved by being active in community events. "Everybody likes to see the old players and they enjoy to continue to be involved in the organization. People like to keep their names intact," said Starks who no longer plays basketball but now focuses on his golf game. He does admit that he still shoots around and has maintained his famous 3-point shot.

Married with three kids, Starks, who lives in Connecticut, keeps in touch with all the guys from his team. His message to young athletes is "be respectful to others. If you stay focused on your goals and work hard at a young age you can accomplish anything."

Olympic skater Emily Hughes, 18, recently graduated high school at Great Neck North and is headed off to Harvard. This is her third appearance at Bay's Big Bash - "A Celebration of Life" and she said, "I love coming back here every year. It's so much fun." This summer she will focus on working on her new skating program for the upcoming season, which starts in October. When kids got an autograph from her, her advice to them was to "just have fun. There may be a lot of pressure and hard work but the bottom line is to have a good time."

Mr. Met drew a lot of attention as he made his way through the crowd high-fiving kids and signing baseballs and taking pictures in front of an antique Mets mobile provided by the Scott family of Bayville.

Bayville's own Jackie "The Joke Man" Martling took the mic and helped out promoting the raffles and auction. When asked to tell jokes he said, "I can't tell any jokes because something is always offensive to someone. If you want to hear a joke come up to me in person. If you tell me a joke I haven't heard, I will give you \$100. If you tell me a joke that I have heard you have to give \$10 to the Cancer Center for Kids."

This year marks Martling's second time at the event and as always he was having a good time. "This is fantastic! Ever year it gets bigger and better. It's a great event. The Ryan/Lovegrove family does a great job," he said. "I love coming back. I'll be here next year and the year after that."