

Record-Breaking Charity Ball Changes Name

The Bridge Family Center, manager of the Mayor's Charity Ball annual fundraising gala since its inception in 2000, is renaming its signature fundraising event for 2009.

The black-tie event will now be called the Children's Charity Ball: An Event of The Bridge Family Center.

"We've been developing this event for nearly a decade now," said Margaret Hann, executive director of the Bridge. "It felt like the right time to change the name to highlight its purpose—to raise funds to provide services for the children in our community."

The 2008 ball, under the old name, the Mayor's Charity Ball, raised a record amount—more than \$190,000 in one night. A sold-out crowd of 370 attended the elegant event.

The annual gala helps fund the Bridge's work with children, youth, and families. Last year, the Bridge served more than 10,000 people (98% from West Hartford) through school-based services; counseling for young people and stressed families; the Teen Center; the Ropes Course; coordination of the West Hartford Substance Abuse Prevention Commission; and community events, such as the annual September Breakfast on The Bridge to honor those who provide services for children and families in our community. The Bridge's crisis response team responds to emergency situations throughout the year in both public and private schools.

The Connecticut Department of Children and Families (DCF) recently licensed the Bridge as West Hartford's second state-sanctioned OPCC, or Outpatient Psychiatric Clinic for Children. The Bridge has experienced a 58 percent increase in referrals since last year, and the new clinic will help to meet the increasing request for its services.

The Bridge has begun planning the 2009 gala to be held on January 24 at the Hartford Golf Club. ING has already committed to being a Presenting Sponsors of the Children's Charity Ball, and Scot Haney will once again be the emcee for the evening. "Stay tuned," said Judy Bierly, manager of the event. "We are busy brainstorming our 10th anniversary ball—expect a gold-spun gala."