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*for A Night
Under the*
Stars

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the stars align

by Audrey Poff, photo by Amy Long

Later this month, on a starry night at Jonesboro Country Club, hundreds will gather to watch the acclaimed Broadway Tenors for the second annual Night of Stars Under the Stars to benefit The Children's Shelter in Northeast Arkansas.

The Children's Shelter is a private, nonprofit organization that provides 24-hour emergency and temporary residential care to children who are victims of family violence, neglect and/or physical or sexual abuse. The shelter, which is located in Walnut Ridge, is designed to meet the needs of children all over Arkansas by providing them with an immediate, safe environment until a suitable relative or foster care becomes available.

The Children's Shelter opened its doors in June 2009. As of August, it had served 547 children from 26 different counties in Arkansas, with the majority of the children coming from Craighead, Greene, Lawrence and Randolph counties.

Fran Cavanaugh, who is again serving as the event's chair, is passionate about raising awareness for the shelter and the children who depend on it.

"Night of Stars Under the Stars came to be because of the need for Craighead County to know that The Children's Shelter is their shelter," said Fran, chief financial officer of Cavanaugh Auto Group and board member for The Children's Shelter. "While over 23 percent of the children we take in at The Children's Shelter come from Craighead County, only about eight percent of donations come from Craighead County. We needed to build awareness for The Children's Shelter in Jonesboro and Craighead County."

Last year, 130 people attended the country chic event, which raised more than \$10,000 for the shelter. Fran and her dedicated committee, which includes Frank Hughey, Amy Pickens, Janice Cranford, Susie Davidson, Liz Boren and Vern Ann Shotts, hope that the 2013 Night of Stars Under the Stars will raise more money this year as more people find out about the unique event and how The Children's Shelter affects local children.

"We bring the city to the country by bringing NYC to Jonesboro," said Fran of what makes the event stand out. "Where else can you hear Broadway stars singing to you under the stars, all while having the most amazing food presented to you in a very unique atmosphere?"

For many, the highlight of the event will be the return of The Broadway Tenors, a talented trio that will include Brent Barrett, John Cudia and Jonesboro native Matt Cavanaugh. The Broadway Tenors consist of numerous singers who perform on Broadway, as well as in trios around the country as part of the Broadway Tenors. The group performed at last year's inaugural Night of Stars Under the Stars and looks forward to again bringing a dose of New York City to Jonesboro.

Matt, who also serves as the director of marketing and advertising for the Cavanaugh Auto Group, has toured the country with various productions and was last seen on Broadway as Tony in "West Side Story." His other Broadway credits include "Grey Gardens," "A Catered Affair" and "Urban Cowboy." In addition to his involvement with numerous other musicals and off-Broadway productions, Matt has also been seen on "One Life to Live," "As the World Turns" and "Law & Order: CI." His debut album, "Gonna Make You Love Me," is available on iTunes and CD Baby.

"This will be the second year for A Night of Stars," said Matt. "The first year went exceedingly well. Fran and her committee have created a really gorgeous setting, and, of course, knowing that all the hard work supports The Children's Shelter really gives purpose to the evening."

Matt says he hopes that the Broadway Tenors match the level of sophistication and class that the Night of Stars committee has created.

"Seriously, the whole idea for a Night of Stars is to give those in attendance a wonderful night of entertainment from Broadway stars underneath the starry skies of Jonesboro," he said. "With Brent, John and myself having starred in some of the biggest Broadway shows ever written, such as such as 'Phantom,' 'Les Miz,' 'West Side Story,' 'Chicago' and more, we hope to bring a little bit of Broadway magic to Jonesboro."

Barrett says that audiences enjoy being able to experience the musical highlights from many Broadway shows without having to sit through all the dialogue. For Matt, it's a matter of giving back to his hometown while doing something he loves.

"Jonesboro has given so much to me," said Matt. "I have had incredible support from my family, teachers and community members throughout my life. It just seems natural to give back.

"Thank you in advance to all those who are able to support Night of Stars and The Children's Shelter. Your contributions are greatly appreciated."

Fran says that the committee spends as much time on the setting and food as they do the music, and the result is a truly magical evening.

"Just purchase your ticket; come enjoy great food and amazing music in a setting that will take your breath away," said Fran. "It really is something you have to experience to understand."

Most importantly, in addition to the unique experience of the event itself, organizers want guests to learn more about and find a connection with the nearby facility that assists many children from the city of Jonesboro.

"I enjoy giving to The Children's Shelter because I feel it is my duty," said Fran. "These children did not ask to be placed in these situations; they did not ask to be neglected or abused. It is our responsibility as a community to help them when they need it the most.

"These children are our future, and they deserve our attention."

The second annual Night of Stars Under the Stars will take place on Oct. 14 at 6 p.m. at Jonesboro Country Club. For tickets or for more information, visit night-of-stars.org. The Children's Shelter is located at 107 Benson Drive in Walnut Ridge. For more information, call (870) 886-5191 or visit thechildrensshelter.org.