

A Wicked Good Time Gala to Raise Money for Children's Medical Equipment

By Vanessa Orr

On Saturday, November 15, Fund It Forward will be hosting 'A Wicked Good Time Gala' in order to raise money to help in their mission of providing medical equipment to children with special needs. The theme, based on the musical, *Wicked*, is somewhat ironic, considering that this nonprofit serves as a fairy godmother to many children who otherwise could not get the help that they need.

Fund It Forward, based in Wexford, helps children with special needs all over the country receive adaptive medical equipment not covered by health insurance, including augmentative communication devices, bath and feeding chairs, enclosed beds, wheelchairs, sensory equipment and certain wheelchair ramps. "We are the only organization of its kind in the country focused on adaptive equipment," explained Executive Director Kristin Hasley.

Fund It Forward was founded by two mothers of children with special needs who wanted to help other families avoid the difficulties they faced in trying to provide safe and secure



environments for their children. Cofounder Rose Morris' son, Abram, was diagnosed with autism at an early age and often had trouble sleeping, putting him in harm's way.

"Children with autism do not have the 'shut down' mechanism that we do, and Abram would stay up all night and keep everyone else awake, making them mentally and physically exhausted," explained Hasley. "Of course, the biggest fear is that he would somehow hurt himself, or find his way out of the home."

Morris, an entrepreneur, invented a product called the Safety Sleeper, which allowed Abram to fall asleep in a cocoon-like tent that fits over a twin-sized mattress. Realizing the importance of adaptive equipment for children with special needs, in 2011 she created Fund It Forward, a nonprofit arm of her company. Jackie Smolinski cofounded the organization after spending many years dealing with insurance forms and fundraisers to meet the needs of her son, Luke, who has a severe form of epilepsy that requires round-the-clock care and adaptive equipment.

Families of children with special needs, most of whom hear of the charity through word-of-mouth, can apply online to receive assistance with getting adaptive equipment. "While some organizations focus on a certain income level or level of need, we focus on how families can help fund it forward," explained Hasley. "There are many ways that they can help increase awareness or advocate for our organization.

"Some of our families hold fundraisers in their own communities, including haunted houses, carwashes and bake sales," she continued. "Others volunteer in our organization in an administrative way, helping with the events we host in Pittsburgh, doing outreach by phone or gathering sponsorships." Families can also take part by lobbying for children with special needs, appearing on local television and radio shows to bring awareness to the cause.

A Wicked Good Time Gala is the organization's largest fundraising event, attracting between 175 and 200 people to the Duquesne Club. Participants will enjoy entertainment, including selections from the score of *Wicked*, photo opportunities, silent and live auctions and an elegant dinner. During the evening, Fund It Forward will also be presenting two awards: the Spirit of the Community award, given to a person who lobbies and advocates for children with special needs on a local, regional or national level, and the Making a Daily Difference award, given to someone who works with children with special needs. ■

TICKETS FOR THE EVENT are \$175 each and can be ordered at www.funditfwd.org. Those not able to attend can also make a donation online.

Please Join

FUND IT  FORWARD

at

A Wicked Good Time Gala



The Duquesne Club

Saturday, November 15, at 6:00 PM

Evening Wear / Black Tie Optional

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