



BESTBUDDIES.

Friendship, Leadership Development & Jobs

NEWS

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18TH ANNUAL BEST BUDDIES MIAMI GALA RAISES \$2.5 MILLION FOR BEST BUDDIES INTERNATIONAL

MIAMI, November 24, 2014 – More than 850 people attended the [18th Annual Best Buddies Miami Gala](#), at **The Fontainebleau Miami Beach** on Friday, **November 21**. The star-studded event raised \$2.5 million in total donations for [Best Buddies International](#), a nonprofit organization dedicated to establishing a global volunteer movement that creates opportunities for one-to-one friendships, integrated employment and leadership development for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD).

The evening's festivities included a fabulous cocktail hour, gourmet dinner, unique live and silent auctions, and a live performance by special musical guest **Jon Secada**.

During the *Gala*, guests celebrated the organization's expansion into Southeast Asia. As a result of phenomenal support, Best Buddies was able to extend its reach globally, and has established a presence in this part of the world with several chapters founded throughout the region since January 2014.

The *Gala* brought together some of Miami's most notable residents and celebrities from around the globe, including *Gala* Co-Chairs **Danny Porush, Linda Coll**, pop artist **Romero Britto, Marc Leder, Alvaro Noboa, Abigal & FJ Pollack, May Liang & Jim Lintott, Anthony K. Shriver, Alina Shriver, Dr. Steven Silverman, Don Soffer** and **Donna & George Zoley**; retired baseball player **Sammy Sosa**; actors **Verne Troyer** and **Omar Benson Miller**; Miami Beach Mayor-elect **Philip Levine**; retired **Miami Heat** player **Alonzo Mourning** and philanthropist wife **Tracy Mourning**; Miss Universe 2013 **Gabriela Isler**; producer **Nan Bush** & her husband, photographer **Bruce Weber**; professional cyclists **George Hincapie, Christian Vande Velde** and **Cameron Wurf**.

As always, there were many one-of-a-kind items up for auction, including an exclusive **Dwayne Wade Hublot Timepiece**; a custom made **Cannondale Best Buddies EVO Bicycle**; a five-star **Trip to Bangkok, Thailand** which includes two roundtrip tickets from Miami to Thailand and a 7-night stay in the cities of Bangkok and Koh Chang; a one-of-a-kind **Romero Britto portrait** which sold twice for a total of \$90,000; a stay at **Karisma Resorts in Azul Mexico** which includes a four day-three night vacation experience; a **Napa Valley** experience package; and a stay at a luxurious **Villa in St. Remy de Provence**. The silent and live auctions raised more than a total of \$585,000 for the organization.

Additional highlights included:

- Buddy participant **Syd Lea** joined Pro-Cyclists **George Hincapie** and **Cameron Wurf** as they cycled 62-miles through the streets of the Magic City Friday morning
- Best Buddies Ambassador and YouTube sensation **Marlana VanHoose** opened the *Gala* with a riveting performance of the National Anthem.
- The Miami Heat's **Alonzo Mourning** and Chicago Cubs **Sammy Sosa** delivered autographed basketballs and baseballs to guests who pledged \$1,000 to "Sponsor a Buddy" to attend Best Buddies International's *Leadership Conference*, raising more than \$65,000 for the



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organization. They also posed for pictures with Best Buddies participants and other *Gala* guests.

- Best Buddies Chairman and Founder Anthony K. Shriver, along with several Best Buddies Ambassadors, handed out medals to [Best Buddies Challenge: Miami](#) participants, who cycled 62-miles through the streets of the Magic City earlier in the day, to help raise over \$500,000 and awareness for the organization.
- Best Buddies participants **Demetrius Dozier, Chris Gay, Samiha Dossul, Pelayo Vigil, James Ramsey, Marcus Gray, and Daniel Fundora** walked the runway in their finest attire during the *Gala's* Best Buddies Fashion Show
- Cuban-American singing sensation **Jon Secada** had the crowd on their feet while performing some of his greatest hits. Before he took the stage, Secada conducted a special meet and greet for top donors and sponsors.

May Liang & Jim Lintott, The GEO Group Foundation, Inc, Med-Care Diabetic & Medical Supplies, Inc and The Ferraro law Firm are Exclusive Sponsors. **Carnival Foundation** is the Presenting sponsor. Platinum donors are **Sun Capital Partners, Lumber Liquidators and Tracfone Wireless Inc.** Other event sponsors at the Premier level include **Don Soffer, Capital Trust Group, Comcast, Compañía de elaborados de café, ELCAFÉ, FIJI Water, Klingman & Associates, Mack Cycle and Fitness, Wells Fargo, ZTE USA, Jan and Jim Field, Christina Griffith, Lydia & Rudy Prio-Touzet and Marlyne Sexton.** In-kind and Media sponsors are **Audi, Aventura Worldwide Transportation Service, Courthouse Express, Deliver Lean, MadisonSouth, OnJuice, Pepsi, Romero Britto, Fontainebleau Hotel - Official VIP Hotel for Best Buddies International, Getty Images - Official Photography Sponsor of Best Buddies International, Niche Media - Premiere Magazine Sponsor of Best Buddies International, and Southern Wine and Spirits.**

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ABOUT BEST BUDDIES INTERNATIONAL:

Best Buddies® is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to *establishing a global volunteer movement that creates opportunities for one-to-one friendships, integrated employment and leadership development for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.* Founded in 1989 by Anthony K. Shriver, Best Buddies is a vibrant organization that has grown from one original chapter to more than 1,700 middle school, high school, and college chapters worldwide. Today, Best Buddies' eight formal programs — *Middle Schools, High Schools, Colleges, Citizens, e-Buddies®, Jobs, Ambassadors, and Promoters* — engage participants in each of the 50 states and in over 50 countries, positively impacting the lives of more than 800,000 people with and without disabilities around the world. In many cases, as a result of their involvement with Best Buddies, people with intellectual and developmental disabilities secure rewarding jobs, live on their own, become inspirational leaders, and make lifelong friendships. For more information, please visit www.bestbuddies.org, facebook.com/bestbuddies or twitter.com/bestbuddies.

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