

Holiday Sweets: Enchanted Performance and Benefit

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The 5th Annual Holiday Party for friends and families of the Turner Syndrome Foundation will feature something special this year. This party is a benefit with proceeds supporting the efforts of the Turner Syndrome Foundation, a national organization dedicated to raising awareness and advocating for all girls and women with the condition. It is a community atmosphere where guests can socialize and perhaps even form lasting relationships. In addition to being in a new venue, the Graycliff, in Moonachie, The Garden State Ballet accompanied by a youth orchestra conducted by Ilene Greenbaum will be performing Tchaikovsky's "The Nutcracker".

What is unique about this production of "The Nutcracker" is that instead of adult dancers being in the spotlight, young dancers are the focus of the performance. Ann Mardon, a volunteer for the Garden State Ballet, said, "Twenty six years ago, Jody Jaron, set out to create a version of "The Nutcracker" that would showcase the achievements of young dancers who through strong training, hard work, and the support of their parents would be able to perform in their own production of this classic ballet. This shorter version keeps even the youngest audience engrossed in the show."

How do the musicians and dancers work together? Jody Jaron, director of the Garden State Ballet, said, "Our orchestra has been with us six years now and is under the direction of Ilene Greenbaum. She and I have a very similar belief in young artists. We both believe that if you set the bar high, students will meet you with hard work and dedication."

Rehearsals for the production begin as early as the end of the summer and the dancers are between the ages of 8 and 18. How do the dancers feel about being part of such a beloved holiday experience? Jaron said, "We both found that this experience was transformative for both the young

dancer and musician. It is an experience that makes both pieces understand how working together creates the whole beautiful experience that becomes live art.”

“The Nutcracker” will be the centerpiece of what is sure to be a memorable special event for the foundation. Sarah Petrassi, Doreen Sullivan, and Tammy Tanski have been working together in previous years and are excited about the entertainment this year. It will be magical to have the orchestra and ballet performance, DJ music for dancing, photo booth, girl glamour stations, and a holiday boutique.

All three women have a personal connection to Turner Syndrome. Sarah has a daughter, Emma, with Turner Syndrome, and said, “Emma was diagnosed at birth after my husband and I insisted something was wrong. Born in a prominent New York City hospital, I was accused of being neurotic. Fortunately, her hip dysplasia caused them to double check and she was karyotyped. We felt alone and wanted to make sure that Emma always had relationships with other girls facing similar challenges. I see her struggle sometimes socially but when surrounded by her Turner Syndrome family—she has a confidence and feeling of belonging that makes all of the work worthwhile.”

This is Tammy’s first year assisting in organizing the Holiday Party and she said, “My daughter has Turner Syndrome and we have been going to the annual party every year. This year I wanted to be more hands on and help out in any way I can. It always feels good helping a great cause.”

Doreen commented on the success of the Turner Syndrome Foundation when she said, “With Laura Fasciano [executive director and founder] at the helm of the foundation, the growth continues to amaze me.” She said that this event is a family tradition and has been involved with organizing the Holiday Party since its inception in 2009. Doreen added, “It’s a fun, happy day to celebrate these girls and the progress the foundation has made over the year. This year will be really special because of our fun theme, our exciting show, and our amazing gifts.”

Jody Jaron added, “This event is an important cause for me and I am hoping that it will be to you as well. Turner Syndrome may only affect 1 in 2,000 young girls; however, there are three girls in our GSB family that have this condition. We will be helping the girls and their families who are dealing with this in their lives.”

Families are often overwhelmed with a diagnosis of Turner Syndrome because of the lack of available information about this complex condition that affects all aspects of a girl’s physical to emotional well-being. The foundation is dedicated to enlightening providers to foster the brightest outcomes.

To learn more about the foundation, visit www.turnersyndrome.org or call 800-594-4585.

The holiday party takes place on Sunday, December 8, 2013, 12pm to 4pm. For more information about the Holiday Party, visit www.turnersyndrome.org/events-patients.html or call 800-594-4585.

