

Annual Crystal Ball raises \$737K for diabetes research

The Crystal Ball, which attracts Long Island's most generous business and philanthropic leaders, shined its spotlight this year on two prominent businessmen and a local family whose legacy has helped propel the organization it supports to the forefront of its field – the Diabetes Research Institute. Among the crowd were daytime television royalty Susan Lucci and world-renowned author Nelson DeMille, who celebrated this black-tie affair with more than 300 additional guests at the Garden City Hotel and raised a record-breaking \$737,000 for diabetes research.

Formerly referred to as the Crystal Ball Honoree, this year's award was renamed the Rowland and Sylvia Schaefer Award, in honor and memory of a couple who made several million-dollar gifts to the DRI in an effort to find a cure for their granddaughter, Dara Melnick. Dara's parents, Roberta and Bruce Waller of Upper Brookville, served as the Crystal Ball Presenting Sponsor and have held fast to the Schaefer's vision and continue to support the organization they believe will end type 1 diabetes for the millions living with it. The inaugural recipient of the award is the scientist leading the charge to find the cure, Dr. Camillo Ricordi, director of the Diabetes Research Institute.

"I am honored to have been presented with the Rowland and Sylvia Schaefer Honoree Award, especially since it pays tribute to Roberta's parents, two of our most generous donors who had a profound impact on our ability to advance research," Dr. Ricordi said. "Their support played a pivotal role in advancing our work in islet cell transplantation to clinical trials."

Schaefer will long be remembered as an innovative entrepreneur who developed many businesses, most notably Claire's Stores, Inc., a worldwide fashion accessory powerhouse. He served on the National Board of the Diabetes Research Institute Foundation for several years. In recognition of the couple's generosity and leadership, the building that houses the Institute's laboratories bears their name.

"Dr. Ricordi's achievements are far too many to mention. Perhaps what matters

most is that he has applied his brilliance and passion to curing this disease for our daughter and everyone living with diabetes," said Waller, who serves as co-chair of the event, along with his sister, Wendy Waller of Fort Lee, NJ.

Also recognized at The Crystal Ball was Allan L. Pashcow, managing partner of Town Realty Co., LLC, a Long Island-based property management firm, as the 2014 Gillin Family Humanitarian Award recipient.

"I am truly touched by all those who supported The Crystal Ball and to have received The Gillin Family Humanitarian Award," Pashcow said. "All those associated with the DRI are committed, passionate and loyal to the DRI and to finding a cure for diabetes. I am grateful to have been recognized as one of them. Louise and I are privileged to have worked side by side, with all of those we call friends, to realize our dream and get us closer to finding a cure."

Frank Pusinelli, executive vice president of operations, property management and construction for RXR Realty received the Distinguished Service Award.

"I am honored to be this year's distinguished service award recipient for the Crystal Ball," Pusinelli said. "When I agreed to participate in this wonderful event on behalf of my friend Doug Donaldson and his beautiful family, I knew I was taking part in a very worthwhile endeavor. Since then as I have gotten to know so many of the people working tirelessly at the DRI to find a cure and I have heard their stories of perseverance, determination and hope, their passion for finding a cure has become infectious and I have become a true advocate for the mission of the DRI. I am a firm believer that they will achieve the goal of finding a cure for diabetes."

DRI scientist Giacomo Lanzoni, spoke passionately about the development of the DRI BioHub, a "mini organ" that mimics the native pancreas restoring insulin production in diabetes patients, and the organization's unending march toward a cure – reminding every person in the room about the importance of their continued support.

