

CAUSE...AND EFFECT

For some individuals, helping others is the most precious gift of all...Meet the city's next generation of Philanthropists...Folks for whom giving back has been a way of life since they were born...as well as the supporting players who bring the social side of charity to life through their respective talents.

NICOLE & MICHAEL
SIMKINS

Married close to 10 years now, high school sweethearts Michael and Nicole Simkins are not new to the world of philanthropy. Michael's mother became an active fundraiser for the Juvenile Diabetes Institute after her brother died at a young age from complications related to the disease. "Mom got involved with the Diabetes Research Institute at Jackson, and they would have an annual party at our house with several hundred people," he recalls. "We would go to the ball even as young kids and were always involved. Nicole has embraced it now, too." Not only has she embraced it, but also, as part of the Young Society of Love and Hope, she is actively helping to support it. "We're in our third year of doing an annual event called Haute Tea, which we hold every May at The St. Regis Bal Harbour," she explains. "It's a lunch and silent auction, and all the women have to wear hats... it's a lot of fun. Every single dollar goes to the Diabetes Research Institute, and it's particularly effective because it has brought a lot of younger women into the charity." Bringing awareness to younger generations is important to the couple, who are parents to daughter Jaden, 7, and son Eli, 4. "We're hoping that, seeing us give to charities, they will end up getting involved," says Nicole. "They're still very young, but we already do beach cleanup with them and talk to them about the importance of giving to your community." And speaking of giving to community, over the past few years, Michael has played an integral role in reviving the old Miami Beach Jewish Community Center on Pine Tree Drive and 42nd Avenue. "They had planned 15 years ago to build a new facility, but nothing happened," he says. "Then five years ago, there was a renewed push, and a couple of years back, we decided to make a big contribution," he says. Now open again, The Galbut Family JCC Simkins Family Campus is a great success. Says Nicole, "There was a big need for it. I'm there all the time with my kids. They have amazing afternoon activities—gymnastics, robotics, acting, sports—and they bus kids in from various elementary schools. The camp just started this summer, and there were more than 500 students. I've heard so many people say how lucky they are to have it." As the capital campaign chair, Michael continues to raise funds for the JCC, while Nicole volunteers. "Miami is such a young community that's developing so rapidly," adds Michael. "I just think on the charitable side, we're underdeveloped. People don't habitually have charity engrained in them, so I try to encourage it. I love hearing stories of people who give. It's something that needs to be discussed."

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