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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Circle 25 Fundraiser Helps to Empower Future Generation

Alton (Madison County), IL – In May, over 200 individuals and businesses supported Riverbend Head Start & Family Services 25th Circle of Care Anniversary Celebration, raising over \$76,000 and exceeding this year's goal.

Each year, since its inception, the organization has honored a different individual or couple. While the purpose of the fundraising event remains two-fold, this year was slightly different. The committee for the 25th event celebration acknowledged all of the past honorees who have exemplified the champion spirit of a caring community for children and families across Madison County by affectionately naming them Circle Alumni. "Circle 25 was all about celebrating the past honorees and their families! We can't thank them enough for forging the way for honorees yet to come and as we look forward, we will embrace the blessings we receive from the children, the families, and from all those who support our agency and its mission," stated Cindy Smalley, Event Chairwoman and Director of Marketing and Communications for Cope Plastics.

Cindy led this year's successful event and steering committee with an avid style of leadership. "I can't imagine how we would have done this without her time, support and energy," stated Gene Howell, President and CEO.

One of the key highlights from the event were parents on stage sharing their personal testimonials. "I was pleased to learn more about each parent's journey and the impact the program has had on their entire family," stated, an anonymous donor. "We really wanted our supporters to understand that their investment is more than a program delivering services and education to children but helping to transform lives and improving the community," expressed, Jahara Davis, PR and Fund Development Director.

In alignment with the theme, "Step Forward to Empower the Next Generation, proceeds raised came from Lead sponsors included Gori Julian and Associates, P.C., Cope Plastics, Inc. (Steve & Jane Saale, Dave & Cindy Smalley and Don & Sharilyn Beem), Jacoby Foundation, Schrimpf Family Foundation, Ed & Patty Morrissey of Morrissey Construction Services, and Dale & Carol Neudecker. Proceeds generated through sponsorships, reservations, auction earnings, raffles and donations from the Circle of Care benefit the children and families enrolled



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in Riverbend Head Start & Family Services' programs. Without the community's support, the organization would not be able to provide its critical services which build solid educational foundations and empowered families.

The fundraiser began with a cocktail hour featuring the musical talents of local musician, Louis Michael. Guests mingled, entered raffle to win Seiko Watch set donated by Maneke Jewelers, Inc and Cardinal's baseball tickets against the Cubs as well as participated in the live auction on a variety of wonderful experiences which included a gourmet cabin overnight stay in Calhoun County, several sports packages and catered parties. Introduced by the evening's Master of Ceremony, Dr. Frank Bemis of Bemis Family Chiropractic and agency Board Member, the invocation was delivered by Father Boase, retired pastor from St. Paul's Episcopal Parish and a dear friend of the Agency and to a few of the Circle Alumni. A delicious dinner of peppercorn pork loin, mashed potatoes, salad, seasonal vegetable medley and assorted desserts, prepared and served by the wonderful Chef Tim Weaver and catering staff of Lewis and Clark Community College. As guests enjoyed their desserts, Gene Howell, Riverbend Head Start & Family Services President & CEO thanked the 51 sponsors and encouraged the 238 guests to bid on the live auction to raise more for the mission. At the start of the program, Howell spoke to the guests about the agency's history and vital role in helping at-risk children and their families.

Maintaining the evening's momentum, Ron Mullen, Benefit Auctioneer enthusiastically entertained the crowd with an animated live auction. Kristin Tanzyus, Market Manager for PNC Bank and recently appointed Chairwoman of the Board, presented this year's Circle Alumni with a 2018 Circle of Care gift as a small token of appreciation. The gift was an embossed lapel pin signifying the founding legacy of Riverbend Head Start and Family Services' Circle 25 Alumni members.

Riverbend Head Start & Family Services empowers families in Madison County, Illinois through six child development centers that offer quality early childhood education, nutrition and health education, in-home case manager visits, dental evaluations, parental-skills development and more. Each year, over 2,000 children ages, birth to five, pregnant moms and their families are served.

Families qualify for the Early Head Start and Head Start programs because they live below the federal poverty line, homeless, have a child with a diagnosed disability or are involved with the Department of Children and Family Services.



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They voluntarily enroll in the agency's programs because they want to improve their own lives and ensure their children have a head start to a successful future.

For more information on how to support Riverbend Head Start & Family Services, please contact PR & Fund Development Director, Jahara Davis at 618/463-5946 or jdavis@riverbendfamilies.org

To view event photos or learn more about programs and volunteer opportunities, visit www.riverbendfamilies.org.

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Photo – Parent_Cassandra Lawrence.jpg

Caption – Parent, Cassandra Lawrence shared how Riverbend Head Start and Family Services has helped transform her family's life since she enrolled in the program. The event raised more than \$75,000 to support the Head Start program that serves more than 2,000 children and their families in Madison County each year. (Photo by Karla Hurley)