

A Game Changer for a great cause

Living Without Limits fundraiser for house of respite



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THEODORA MAIOS

On Friday 20 May, the South Australian children's charity Living Without Limits Foundation hosted its annual signature fundraiser event, 'Game Changer', to a 350-person, sold-out luncheon at the National Wine Centre.

Founded in 2012 by leading Adelaide businessmen Phillip de Pinto of Universal Motor Auctions, Steve Maras, CEO of Maras Group and George Yatzis, Adelaide partner of BDO, the not-for-profit foundation was established to raise funds for very specific purposes, primarily in relation to autism and cerebral palsy.

Former head coach of the Australian cricket team, Darren Lehmann, attended as the special guest and was interviewed on stage for almost an hour by local sporting MC identity Brent Felice. Lehmann spoke about his life journey and his cricketing career, both as a player and a coach.

One of the highlights of the afternoon was the declaration by vice chairman Steve Maras that Lehmann would become the foundation's inaugural official ambassador, an announcement that sparked a standing ovation from the audience.

Foundation chairman Phillip de Pinto conducted the main auction, which saw a collection of prized items raise approximately \$100,000; a substantial amount which will go towards assisting the foundation to purchase a property by the South Australian seaside for the primary purpose of establishing a house of respite.

This facility will be for families of children challenged by autism and cerebral palsy to have a break from their daily challenges and enjoy a short holiday, something critically needed by thousands of families. The foundation is now on the hunt to purchase an established dwelling around the Victor Harbor region which it will adapt, as required, to suit.

Foundation vice chairman Steve Maras said that the event was several months in the planning and its execution was a major success.

"These events take considerable time, effort and energy to put together and we are only a small team of four, punching way above our weight to deliver the very best we can.

"The ever-so-generous support of people attending the event, which sold out within a few weeks, the many individuals and businesses who donated auction items or provided 'in-kind' assistance, and those who volunteered in other capacities, was overwhelming and we are so very grateful for all the support.

"These events for these causes bring out the very best in human nature and it's an honour to serve this organisation and continue pushing hard to lend assistance for all the children who are challenged by autism and cerebral palsy," the businessman concluded.



Autism is a neurodevelopmental disorder which refers to lifelong developmental disabilities characterised by marked difficulties in social interaction, impaired communication, restricted and repetitive interests and behaviours and sensory sensitivities.

Parents usually notice signs of autism in the first two years of their child's life. These signs often develop gradually, though some children with autism reach their developmental milestones at a normal pace and then regress.

The diagnostic criteria require that symptoms become apparent in early childhood, typically before age three. The good news is that - contrary to reports that the rates of autism spectrum disorder

are on the rise - researchers at the University of Queensland found no evidence of an increase of the condition in the past 20 years, although a lot of research is yet to support this theory.

On the other hand, cerebral palsy is the most common physical disability in childhood which can affect body movement, muscle control, muscle coordination, muscle tone, reflex, posture and balance. People who have cerebral palsy may also have visual, learning, hearing, speech, epilepsy and intellectual impairments. Unfortunately for most patients, the cause is not known, although it is believed that usually, cerebral palsy is a direct result of damage to the developing brain either during pregnancy or shortly after birth.

In Australia there are approximately 34,000 people with cerebral palsy while worldwide, the incidence of this disability is one in 500 births.

For more information on the Living Without Limits Foundation, visit www.lwl.org.au