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Laura's House 'Bahama Nights' Gala Raises Nearly \$400,000 as Supporters #StrandAgainstDV

Annual charity event unites community leaders, notable personalities in ending domestic violence

NEWPORT BEACH, Calif., Oct. 13, 2015 – It was an evening of empowerment, celebration and hope as more than 350 supporters of [Laura's House](#), a Southern California nonprofit dedicated to the prevention and education of domestic violence, gathered at the Island Hotel on Saturday, Oct. 10. The 'Bahama Nights' charity soiree, sponsored by Laura Khouri and Michael K. Hayde, raised nearly \$400,000 for the nonprofit's emergency shelter, community programs and legal advocacy services – critical resources for domestic violence survivors in Orange County and beyond.

The event included numerous emotional moments, including powerful remarks from domestic violence victim Nancy Tran, who courageously took the stage to share her cautionary story of survivorship. Tran recounted the night when her ex-boyfriend viciously doused her in gasoline – and lit her body on fire – resulting in emotional and physical scars she will bear for the rest of her life. After overcoming the trauma, Tran now dedicates her life to protecting others from violence alongside Laura's House advocates. A compelling video about the Laura's House children's art therapy program also captivated the audience, and gave attendees a look at the lives touched by the team at Laura's House.

"The work we do at Laura's House is so important to survivors like Nancy, and without the support of the community, rebuilding violence-free lives for families would be nearly impossible," said Margaret Bayston, Laura's House CEO and executive director. "It gives us great joy to gather with our supporters for a memorable evening each year, while urging them to pledge to help end domestic violence."

Upon arrival, attendees enjoyed a tropical-themed cocktail reception filled with upbeat island tunes, Mai Tais from Tommy Bahama's Island Grille and a silent auction filled with luxury items, including a custom Laura's House necklace and bracelet from global, multimillion-dollar jewelry brand [Kendra Scott](#). Donning hibiscus flowers and straw hats, guests also posed for fun Bahamas-themed photos. Guests also unleashed their inner purple power by taking the social media challenge [#StrandAgainstDV](#). By coloring strands of their hair purple – the national color of domestic violence – participants helped raise awareness and funds for Laura's House during National Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

[Carolyn Johnson](#), award-winning journalist of NBC4 Southern California, emceed the program, which included touching speeches from honorary gala chairs Julia and George Argyros and inspiring remarks from gala chair Laura Khouri and Bayston.

"For the last 21 years, Laura's House has touched the lives of so many domestic violence survivors thanks to our supporters and their tireless contributions," said Khouri. "Our long-term

goal is to continue growing as an organization that helps to create a world where people do not suffer from domestic violence, and we urge everyone to join us.”

Robin McGraw, founder and CEO of [When Georgia Smiled: The Robin McGraw Revelation Foundation](#), was recognized with this year's Crystal Heart Award for her advocacy work that has spanned the globe and brought national attention to the issue of domestic violence. McGraw is a philanthropist, television personality, entrepreneur and best-selling author dedicated to creating and advancing programs that help victims of domestic violence and sexual assault live healthy and safe lives. In 2014, When Georgia Smiled awarded its first grant of \$50,000 to Laura's House to expand its legal advocacy services. As a result of this crucial contribution, the nonprofit's Courthouse Advocacy Program is on pace to provide legal services to a record number of domestic violence survivors in 2015.

During the program, McGraw presented Troy Marston with the Legal Leaders Award. Troy has volunteered more than 200 hours of volunteer service in support of the Courthouse Advocacy Program. Through Marston's generous service, nearly 1500 survivors will be provided with legal support this year to avoid having to face their abusers alone in court.

Elizabeth Eckman accepted the Corporate Crystal Heart Award on behalf of [PIMCO](#), one of the world's leading investment management firms, and a longtime supporter of the Laura's House mission to end the silence of domestic violence. Since 2003, the company has provided Laura's House with critical funding and volunteer support to ensure local programs and services are available to Orange County residents.

The evening closed with the “Rebuild a Life” program, which raised a record-breaking total of more than \$150,000. All went home with Laguna candles generously donated by Voluspa, and Winston's Jewelers gift cards. On the heels of another successful gala, Laura's House will continue raising awareness – and support for its families – throughout October in honor of domestic violence awareness month. Supporters are encouraged to show their purple power and take the #StrandAgainstDV social media challenge and donate to Laura's House. More information at: <https://www.laurashouse.org/news/strandagainstdv>.

Presenting sponsors for the 2015 gala are Laura Khouri, president of Western National Property Management and Laura's House board member and Michael K. Hayde, CEO and chairman of the board of [Western National Group](#). **Paradise Island Sponsors** include Donna & Dick Pickup, and Nancy & Geoffrey Stack. **Grand Bahama Sponsors** are The Jacqueline Glass Family and David M. Stone. **Bimini Island Sponsors** include The Busch Family Foundation, Haskell & White LLP, Idea Hall, The Joe MacPherson Foundation, Park Newport Apartments, PIMCO, When Georgia Smiled: The Robin McGraw Revelation Foundation, Morgan Stanley/The Timpe Group. **Table Sponsors** are Lisa & Les Fujimoto, Frome Foundation, Hittelman Law Group, Pat & Rick McAuley, Rutan & Tucker LLP, Union Bank and Verizon Wireless.

About Laura's House

The mission of Laura's House is to change the social beliefs, attitudes and the behaviors that perpetuate domestic violence while creating a safe space to empower individuals and families affected by abuse.

For more than 20 years, Laura's House has served those whose lives have been affected by domestic violence. Over the past two decades, Laura's House has provided shelter and support

services to more than 4,000 battered women and children and counseling, life skills education and legal assistance to nearly 50,000 people. Connect with Laura's House on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [YouTube](#).

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