

Hope & Cope fêtes 30 years



H&C founder/chairman Sheila Kussner is flanked by Ethan Bortnick and Marvin Hamlisch. Standing are H&C executive director Suzanne O'Brien; singer Marie-Christine; and co-chairs Heleena Wiltzer and Pauline Segel.

By Naomi Gold
Special to The Suburban

Hope & Cope, the Jewish General Hospital's psychosocial cancer support service recently crowned a year-long series of celebratory events with their Soirée Fantastique at Congregation Shaar Hashomayim. Founded by cancer survivor/philanthropist Sheila Kussner, H&C's program has been replicated worldwide as the model for excellence in cancer care volunteerism.

Soirée proceedings began with a warm welcome from H&C co-president Jeannette Valmont, who thanked the 450 guests for their support. Co-chairs Heleena Wiltzer and Pauline Segel introduced H&C's chairman, Sheila Kussner, who immediately credited her husband Marvin as being central to her success. "This milestone is as much his as mine," she noted. Kussner then quoted Mahatma Gandhi: "The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others."

She thanked volunteers and donors for being so generous with their time and money before announcing that almost \$1.7 million had been raised. Nicknamed Sheila Corleone by the hospital, Kussner also saluted her "right arm" woman, H&C executive director Suzanne O'Brien.

Guests were entertained by virtuoso musician/composer Marvin Hamlisch, 10-year-old American keyboard prodigy Ethan Bortnick, local chanteuse Marie-Christine and Paul Chacra's 1945 orchestra.

Hamlisch mastered the ivories as he performed an ear-boggling array of musical genres. His Oscar-winning song *The Way We Were* and *A Chorus Line's What I Did for Love*, were interpreted by Haitian Québécoise, Marie-Christine. Introducing *Nobody Does it Better*, from the film *The Spy Who Loved Me*, he effused: "of course they wanted me for James Bond!"

Who knew that Hamlisch is a standup comic when he's not sitting down?

For more information, visit www.hopeandcope.ca



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