

Smart Kids with Learning Disabilities held its 21st Anniversary Gala



By Smart Kids with Learning Disabilities Jun 17, 2021 Updated Jul 27, 2021

NORWALK, Conn., June 17, 2021 /PRNewswire-PRWeb/ -- On Thursday, May 13, Smart Kids with Learning Disabilities (SKLD) hosted its 21st anniversary benefit gala via Zoom Live. The evening celebrated the winners of the annual Fred J. Epstein Youth Achievement Awards, as well as honoring Leslie Josel, the founder of Order Out of Chaos, and Dave Sylvestro, psychologist and a founding staff member of Eagle Hill School in Greenwich, CT. Dr. Chris Bogart, the Co-Executive Director of the Sasco River Center and the Board President of Smart Kids with Learning Disabilities served as master of ceremonies.

One highlight of the evening was a VIP reception with Henry Winkler, the Golden Globe award-winning actor, director, and author, and Honorary Chairman of SKLD, who conducted a private conversation with sponsors and guests who purchased premium tickets for the event. Mr. Winkler enthralled his audience, describing how he became a renowned actor and author, following his struggles as a child with dyslexia and ADHD. As he advised his listeners, "You do not know what you can accomplish unless you try. Every one of us has greatness inside us."

Leslie Josel accepted the 2021 SKLD Professional Achievement Award. An ADHD academic and parenting coach, she is the founder of Order Out of Chaos, a virtual company whose mission is to help parents guide their students to success in learning and in life. She commented in accepting the award that "a person is only as successful as the people alongside you on your journey." Leslie is the creator of the award-winning Academic Planner: A Tool for Time Management®, and the author of 3 books including the recently published, "How to Do It Now Because It's Not Going Away: An Expert Guide to Getting Stuff Done." She has presented at many events for SKLD.

The 2021 SKLD Community Service award was presented to Dave Sylvestro, a founding staff member and former Head of Psychology Services of Eagle Hill School, Greenwich CT who continues as a part-time school psychologist at The Southport School in Southport, CT. He is beloved for having guided several generations of both students and parents, who believes that "it takes a community to nurture, teach and guide our children who have learning differences." Dave is a member of the advisory board of The Cedar School in Greenwich, CT and continues to speak both regionally and nationally at the LDA (Learning Disabilities Association of America), and at SPEDNET Wilton, and SKLD.

Six high school students were presented with the 2021 Fred J. Epstein Youth Achievement Awards, recognizing young people with learning disabilities and ADHD for outstanding accomplishments. The honorees, who came from five states, demonstrate what young people with learning and attention challenges can achieve through dedication, talent, initiative, and the support of their families and teachers. The awards are named for the late Dr. Fred Epstein, who credited his learning disabilities for fueling his professional success, and became an inspiration for children with learning challenges and their families.

Betty Granata, a SKLD volunteer and former staff member, spoke about how the organization changed her life. Feeling overwhelmed and isolated after giving up her job as a marketing manager in a Fortune 100 company to advocate for her two sons with learning disabilities, she gained hope and inspiration through SKLD. "It was the first time anyone talked about what was right about my kids," she said. "Smart Kids with LD gave me the courage and clarity to find the right path for my children."

Guests participated in a live auction conducted by Sherry Truhlar, President of Red Apple Auctions, bidding for items that included a vacation in Tuscany, a 3-course tasting menu for 6 people at Match restaurant in South Norwalk, CT, and an evening on Broadway with dinner at Sardi's and premium tickets to Jagged Little Pill. The event raised close to \$110,000, which will be used to continue the non-profit organization's efforts to educate and inspire parents of children with learning and attention difficulties.

The Bridge Program at the Wooster School in Danbury CT, which focuses on assisting students with language-based learning issues, was a Gold Sponsor for the gala. Silver Sponsors included the Fairfield County Bank, Marc Hoffman in tribute to Dave Sylvestro, and the Sasco River Center. Bronze sponsors were Winston Preparatory School in Norwalk, CT, Eagle Hill School in Greenwich, CT, Order out of Chaos, Sari and Jay Canell, and People's United Bank.

About Smart Kids with Learning Disabilities, Inc.

Smart Kids with Learning Disabilities, Inc. is a Norwalk, CT-based nonprofit organization dedicated to helping children with learning and attention differences reach their full potential by inspiring, educating and empowering parents to help their children succeed. It produces educational programs, a free e-newsletter and blog, and award-winning website, <http://www.SmartKidswithLD.org> in addition to pre-literacy skills training for children in underserved communities. Honorary Board members include former Connecticut Governor Dannel Malloy, Anne Ford, and Dr. Benjamin Powers, Head of The Southport School. Henry Winkler, Golden Globe award-winning actor, director, and author, serves as the organization's Honorary Chairman.

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