'A Night in the Big Apple' raises funds for TCDSB

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Friday, 16 November 2012 14:14

The Angel Foundation for Learning's eighth Evening to Feed the Soul Gala
raises funds for Catholic students in the Toronto Catholic District School Board.
Top: Emcee Marc Kielburger (left); AFL gala organizers Jessica Colucci, Marisa Celenza
and Stephanie Caruso; and TCDSB Director of Education Bruce Rodrigues.
-Photos by Jean Ko Din

VAUGHAN, ONT.It was a night of showbiz, glamour and big apples at The Angel Foundation for Learning's eighth annual Evening to Feed the Soul Gala.

More than 1,200 guests attended the New York-themed event on Nov. 9 to support the Canadian charity that provides financial assistance to some 35,000 students in the Toronto Catholic District School Board.

In its 26th year of service, the AFL spent more than $2 million during the 2011-2012 schoolyear on its four wings of support: student nutrition programs, socialwork, school trips and bursaries for high school students.

Most of the funding goestowards 133 nutrition programsin 109 sites within the TCDSB.The foundation spends $1.9million to feed 30,000 elementaryand secondary students daily.

According to AFL executivedirector Marisa Celenza, a retired school principal, the foundation's staff is "actually very small, with only six staff members." However, it continues to support 40 percent of students in the TCDSB.About five per cent of the overall revenue goes towards administration,and the rest of thefinances help run the programsfor students.

"The Angel Foundation ofLearning is our official charity,"said Bruce Rodrigues, the Toronto board's director ofeducation. "It means that whenthe school board raises funds,we give the foundation financial support first."

"This is a good time to spendwith friends at the TorontoCatholic District School Board community," said Rodrigues of his first gala. "We're united inwork and now we're united for agood cause for our students.

"Returning as Master of Ceremoniesfor the gala was MarcKielburger, co-founder of Freethe Children with his brotherCraig.

"Although Free the Children focuses internationally and the Angel Foundation for Learning focuses locally, we are both natural partners," said Kielburger,an alumnus of Brebeuf CollegeSchool. "I've always been part ofthe Toronto Catholic community,I know them and they know my brother and I very well.

"Free the Children has so much respect for what the Angel Foundation does."

An early estimate is that the gala raised $60,000.