

GOOD EVENING, EVERYONE!

AND THANK YOU, RON, FOR YOUR KIND INTRODUCTION.

IT IS TRULY AN HONOR TO GATHER WITH YOU TONIGHT IN SUPPORT OF THIS WORTHWHILE CAUSE.

LET ME BEGIN BY THANKING THIS YEAR'S COMMITTEE FOR ORGANIZING SUCH AN IMPRESSIVE EVENT, AS WELL AS THANK THE SPONSORS WHO HELP AUTISM SPEAKS CONTINUE TURNING ITS MISSION INTO A REALITY.

AS YOU MAY KNOW, AUTISM SPEAKS WAS CREATED BY MEMBERS OF A FAMILY TOUCHED BY AUTISM.

SUZANNE AND BOB WRIGHT HAD A GRANDCHILD WITH AUTISM, AND THEIR UNDERSTANDING OF HOW THIS DISORDER CAN AFFECT OUR LOVED ONES IS REFLECTED IN THE IMPORTANT WORK AUTISM SPEAKS PERFORMS TODAY.

EARLIER THIS EVENING, MANNY GAUNAURD WALKED US THROUGH ONGOING EFFORTS OF AUTISM SPEAKS TO IMPROVE THE LIVES OF THOSE

WITH AUTISM AND TO INCREASE SERVICES AVAILABLE TO THEM.

THANK YOU FOR ENLIGHTENING US, MANNY.

AUTISM SPEAKS CONTINUES TO BE A CHAMPION IN ITS SUPPORT OF RESEARCH INTO THE CAUSES, PREVENTION, TREATMENT, AND CURE FOR AUTISM; EFFORTS TO INCREASE AWARENESS OF AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS;

AND ADVOCACY FOR THE NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH AUTISM, AS WELL AS THEIR FAMILIES.

THE HELP PROVIDED BY AUTISM SPEAKS IMPACTS A SIGNIFICANT PORTION OF OUR COMMUNITY.

AUTISM AFFECTS 1 IN 68 PEOPLE IN THIS COUNTRY.

THAT NUMBER IS SO LARGE THAT AUTISM IS CONSIDERED A NATIONAL HEALTH CRISIS.

AND THE PREVALENCE OF AUTISM IS GROWING.

IN FACT, AUTISM IS THE FASTEST-GROWING DEVELOPMENTAL DISORDER IN THE UNITED STATES.

AND THIS PARTICULAR DEVELOPMENTAL DISORDER IS DIFFICULT TO FIND ANSWERS FOR, DUE TO ITS PUZZLING NATURE.

THAT'S PART OF WHY THE PUZZLE PIECE IS THE INTERNATIONAL SYMBOL FOR AUTISM.

AS WE ALL KNOW THERE IS CURRENTLY NO CURE FOR AUTISM.

BUT TOGETHER, THROUGH THE WORK OF THIS ORGANIZATION AND EVERYONE WHO SUPPORTS THE CAUSE, WE CAN PUT TOGETHER THE PIECES OF THIS PUZZLE.

I'M PROUD TO SEE THE 'PUZZLE PIECES OF OUR COMMUNITY GALA' THRIVING FOR A FIFTH YEAR –

AND MAY IT CONTINUE TO THRIVE.

THE MONEY DONATED TODAY BY ALL OF THE GENEROUS SPONSORS WILL MAKE A TREMENDOUS DIFFERENCE TO THIS ORGANIZATION AND THE FAMILIES IT ASSISTS.

THANK YOU TO ALL WHO HAVE TAKEN PART IN THIS EVENT, FROM THE ORGANIZERS TO EVERYONE IN ATTENDANCE;

THANK YOU TO OUR MEDIA PARTNERS FOR HELPING TO SPREAD THE WORD;

THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS FOR YOUR VITAL SUPPORT;

AND THANK YOU TO THE GOOD PEOPLE OF AUTISM SPEAKS, WHOSE WORK MAKES LIVING WITH AUTISM A LITTLE BIT EASIER EVERYDAY.

AS MAYOR OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, I AM TRULY HUMBLLED TO BE NAMED AS AN HONOREE THIS EVENING, BECAUSE IT MEANS THAT THE EFFORTS OF THE COUNTY HAVE BEEN HELPING YOU TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

THANK YOU ONCE AGAIN TO EVERYONE INVOLVED, MAY GOD BLESS YOU AND MAY GOD CONTINUE TO BLESS MIAMI-DADE COUNTY!

IT IS NOW MY PLEASURE TO INVITE EVENT CHAIR SUSAN MACHADO TO THE STAGE FOR THE PRESENTATION OF AWARDS.