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## NYC'S MOST CHARITABLE RAISE A GLASS -- AND FUNDS -- FOR TRANSPLANT PATIENTS AT HOPE FOR HEARTS BENEFIT

*Stars come out to shine at benefit wine mixer at The Vinatta Project*

**NEW YORK, NY** – Mar. 1, 2012 – The Eric De La Cruz Hope For Hearts Foundation today applauded the nearly \$8,000 raised Tuesday through a benefit wine mixer held at New York City's Vinatta Project to support Hope For Hearts' financial assistance efforts for heart transplant candidates and their families.

"The philanthropic community in New York has long understood the need to 'give back,' and that was clearly evident in this show of support for the Foundation's mission and the great people we are trying to help," said Hope For Hearts founder and MSNBC television journalist Veronica De La Cruz. "The contributions raised through our 'Raise A Glass' benefit will make a real difference in many people's lives."

"Health and the ability to get the treatment you need to protect it are two things that far too many of us take for granted," added De La Cruz. "The people and companies who came together to donate money, items and their presence at this event have shown their strong support for Hope For Hearts' work, and we are overwhelmed and so appreciative of their assistance."

Nearly 150 guests from the media, entertainment, banking and other industries attended the event, which was hosted by De La Cruz and co-hosted by fellow MSNBC personalities Thomas Roberts and Richard Lui. This year, the benefit was held at The Vinatta Project in New York City's Meatpacking District and featured musical selections by members of Brooklyn band Snowmine and a silent auction to raise money for Hope For Hearts' candidates. Cellar Angels, a Chicago-based wine buying membership club that has joined in support of the Foundation, generously provided wine for the event.



MSNBC's Richard Lui, Veronica De La Cruz and Thomas Roberts co-hosted the event.



A large crowd of supporters were in attendance at NYC's Vinatta Project.



Kelly Salerno, mother of heart transplant candidate Colby Salerno, with MSNBC's Veronica De La Cruz

A 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, the Eric De La Cruz Hope For Hearts Foundation provides financial assistance to transplant patients in need and offers awareness and education programs aimed at supporting those facing the challenge of obtaining a heart transplant. The Foundation was formed in 2010 by De La Cruz after the death of her younger brother, Eric, who suffered from severe dilated cardiomyopathy and was denied insurance coverage for a heart transplant due to his pre-existing condition. Eric De La Cruz passed away awaiting a heart transplant on July 4, 2009.

At Tuesday night's benefit, De La Cruz introduced guests to Kelly Salerno, the mother of a young heart transplant candidate in Connecticut for whom the Foundation is working to raise funds. Colby Salerno is 24 years old and suffers from cardiomyopathy and is awaiting a heart transplant while living in the hospital. In addition to raising funds to assist the Salernos with expenses, the Foundation is making efforts to increase awareness of the urgent need for organ donation throughout the country on the family's behalf.

Among the donated items auctioned in support of the Foundation were a trip to Thailand, a flight aboard a private charter jet, dinner for four prepared by a celebrity chef, and MSNBC/NBC studio tours led by network anchors. Attendees

*(continued on page 2)*



*Jane Lerman, Veronica De La Cruz, and Emma Cleary at The Vinatta Project.*

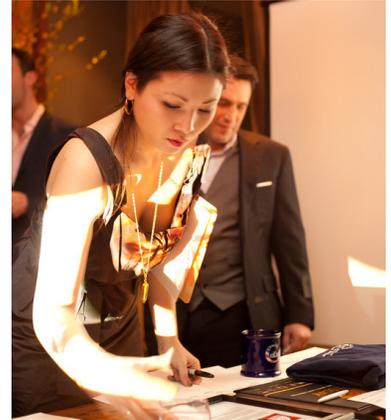
through via social media. Those interested in learning more about heart health and how to support the Hope For Hearts Foundation should visit the organization's website at <http://www.hopeforheartsfoundation.org>.

also donated money to attend the event, and several companies donated products and services to help make the benefit a success.

De La Cruz noted: "The energy and enthusiasm brought to this event by so many wonderful and caring people signals the beginning of more - and bigger - events the Foundation will host in the future. As long as there are families that need help to get their second chance at life, I know our community of supporters will continue to grow."

The benefit event came at the end of National Heart Health Month, a designation which the Foundation also observed through a "Tip-A-Day For Heart Health" campaign delivered

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*A silent auction raised money for heart transplant patients in need.*