

Halo Hits Jackpot

Hundreds of local children who have been abused or neglected and placed in foster care benefit from the proceeds raised at Halo Society's annual Cowtown Casino fundraiser.

by Katie Martinez



GETTING ON A FUTURE / Proceeds from Halo Society's Cowtown Casino benefit hundreds of local children who have been neglected and placed in foster care.

NOT SINCE BAT MASTERSON AND WYATT EARP STACKED CHIPS AT THE CARD TABLES OF THE WHITE ELEPHANT SALOON HAS A LIVELIER BUNCH PLAYED THE ODDS IN THE STOCKYARDS—that is until the Halo Society came to town.

The children's charity is hosting its second annual Cowtown Casino at River Ranch in the Stockyards, March 7. The games are for entertainment only, but the stakes couldn't be higher. The ticket sales, donations and silent auction proceeds from the event benefit hundreds of local children who have been abused or neglected and placed in the foster care system. Halo acts as guardian angel to these kids by supporting CASA of Tarrant County, the local chapter of a nationwide volunteer organization of court-appointed children's advocates and operating two complementary charity programs for the families CASA serves.

The night includes a buffet-style barbecue dinner, a cash bar and a chance to hob-knob with some big names. Miss Texas 2008, Rebecca Robinson of Buffalo, will be a guest of honor and hostess, signing autographs and greeting guests.

"The Cowtown Casino is a really fun night and a great way to raise money, but the real story is what we do with that money all year through the Halo Society," said Jodi Beard, director of public relations for Halo.

The auxiliary services provided to CASA bring awareness and aid to the organization, which trains and provides volunteer advocates who are then court-appointed by a judge to study the case and get to know the child's situation. Volunteers watch over and advocate, making sure the

child doesn't get lost in the overburdened legal and social service system or an inappropriate group or foster home. They ensure this happens by staying with the case until it is closed and the child is placed in a safe, permanent home.

Bric Shelton, who co-founded The Halo Society with his wife, Bridget, in mid-2007, became involved with CASA through an annual golf tournament his professional organization put on to benefit the organization. The couple quickly realized that there was a limit on how much money could be raised at the event and wanted to do more, so they approached CASA with some alternative ideas. "The funny thing was that I feared they were going to ask me to do another golf tournament, and they were afraid I was going to ask them to do another golf tournament," Bric said. "In the end, they told me to use my judgment and see what I could come up with."

A few months later, Halo was born. Three area legal groups—The Fort Worth Chapter of the Association of Legal Administrators, the Tarrant County Young Lawyers Association and the Women's Section of the Tarrant County Bar Association—helped launch the charity by sponsoring a donation drive. Since its inception less than two years ago, the Society has grown to include more than 200 members and has raised thousands of dollars for the cause. In addition to raising awareness about CASA and steering volunteers and monetary donations to the organization, Halo operates two aid programs to benefit the families represented by CASA.

The Apple Tree program, much like the Salvation Army Angel Tree, provides a package of school supplies in a new backpack complete with school clothes and shoes to get kids started off right at their new school. Halo House, the organization's other program, provides some of the basic household items the families of newly placed children need to prepare for their arrival.

The Halo Society members never actually get to meet the kids they help. Because of privacy laws regarding children in foster care, the children's identities are never known by their guardian angels. "We are fighting for the kids that nobody ever sees or hears from," he said. "It is a selfless act, and that is what really warms people's hearts. It's a true act of charity." ■

HALO SOCIETY'S SECOND ANNUAL CASINO NIGHT

When: March 7 at 7 p.m.

Where: River Ranch, 500 NE 23rd St.

Admission: \$10; VIP tables available

Contact: info@halosociety.com | CASA: 817.877.5891