

Their Cause Is Students' Enrichment

[Frank Rizzo](#) April 4, 2023



Enjoying the dinner dance were, from left, Antonietta Manzi (Tower Foundation board director and Manhasset Chamber of Commerce co-president), Argie Vatakis (Foundation vice president), Abi Kasselakis (Foundation director), Manhasset Superintendent of Schools Gaurav Passi, Town of North Hempstead Supervisor Jen DeSena, Vicky Giouroukakis (Foundation co-president), Caroline Smith (Foundation board director), Christina Pullo Daloia (Foundation co-president) and Dina Camera (Foundation board director). (Photos by Frank Rizzo)

Dozens enjoy Tower Foundation dinner-dance

Nothing like a dinner-dance in a fancy club to blow away the blues on a cold late winter's night.

Attendees got to feast on a tempting variety of food, enjoy a "fire" dancer, bid on dozens of valuable raffles, let loose on the dance floor, dress their best, renew old friendships and maybe make new ones.

And it was all for a good cause.

The Tower Foundation held its annual dinner-dance last month at the North Hempstead Country Club in Port Washington. The night's theme was "Carnival in Rio" and quite a few brave folks ventured in with adventurous costumes.

Founded in 1991 to aid the Manhasset public schools during a period of declining state aid to public education, the foundation has amply fulfilled its mission. In its three decades, it has contributed more than \$2.4 million for a variety of programs that otherwise would not have been funded.

When the district suffered a cyberattack in 2021 that crippled its network, the foundation came through with moneys to purchase wireless hot spots.

Other initiatives include supplying Chromebooks to every Manhasset student, developing the middle school

Library/Media Center and the Foreign Language Learning Center, purchasing musical instruments and equipment for the Engineering Suite, enhancing the "Future-Ready" classroom and disbursing annual teacher grants for professional development.

This school year, according to co-presidents Vicky Giouroukakis and Christina Pullo Daloia, the foundation is focusing on the following projects:

- Stadium lighting for the new multipurpose field at the secondary school, which is also used by athletic organizations within the community. "The Tower contribution will provide funding towards the completion of this project and is helping to mitigate unexpected expenses related to the Town of North Hempstead's updated lighting regulations," they noted in a letter.
- Broadcast Journalism Program enhancements, an extremely popular program that benefits students of all grades. "The funding would enhance and expand the current program and related curriculum by providing critical, upgraded equipment."
- Upgrades to the English as a New Language (ENL) Lab that will create a more functional and flexible instructional space, heavily used by all English language learners.

Within the high school, the Junior Tower Foundation, led by Connor Gibbons, puts on events and aids with the fundraising efforts.

As Pullo Daloia said in a video about the foundation produced by the Manhasset Broadcasting Channel, "You walk around the schools, you're going to see Tower Foundation signs everywhere."

She added, "At the end of the day, we are a non-profit that is here [to] raise funds for our school so that we can enhance the school experience for all of our students."

The way it works, according to Giouroukakis, is that "we meet with the district and talk about possible initiatives that they would like us to fund, and we take those ideas back to the board and then we vote on the initiative that we're going to fund that year."

She noted that the foundation works closely with the School Community Association (SCA).

"We try to fund initiatives that are not in the budget, that are the sort of the cherry on top and not basic needs of the district," Giouroukakis added.

Praise For The Foundation

In the words of Superintendent of Schools Gaurav Passi,

“The Tower Foundation helps fund a number of initiatives that our regular school budget could not support. Behind those talented teachers is a community that is supporting our students and supporting our schools in some really meaningful ways. [That’s] a recipe for a really successful school district.”

“Much of Manhasset’s success could be attributed to the Tower Foundation,” said Megan Amato, a senior and news director of the Manhasset Broadcasting Channel. “Their work has enriched our town, and [with community support] will continue to do so. Part of the Tower Foundation lives right here at the high school, with the Junior Tower Foundation, [which] not only holds fabulous events like Bingo Night, but also teaches our students how to be positive contributors to society.”

Laurie Marshall-Lauria, the district coordinator of world languages, ENL and student activities said of the foundation, “They are going to be embracing the ENL Lab [and] it’s a space that’s been a challenge and Tower is going to help us create a home base for many of the students that have just arrived to this country.”

A narrator of the video noted that “the [ENL] has produced highly successful students, such as Allen M. Qian, a Regeneron Scholar [who did] original research on COVID-19” and was awarded a patent for his method of reducing the

vaccine's side effects.

For more information about and to donate to the 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization, visit www.towerfoundation.com. You can also designate it as your charity of choice at www.smile.amazon.com.

Dinner Dance Sponsors

Platinum: Manzi Family.

Gold: Luca and Artemis DiCiero; Eric Linder and Michele Docharty; NuBest Salon and Spa; and Benvenuti Salumeria.

Silver: K.A. Murphy Interiors; Pubs Litchen and Taphouse; Camera Family (in honor of Catherine Camera); Christina Pullo and Jim Daloia; Vicky and John Giouroukakis; and Argie and George Vatakis.

Grand Raffle Prize Donors: The Scala Family & Parkway Pest Services; and The Board of Directors of The Tower Foundation of Manhasset.

Dinner Dance Patrons: Brian and April Blum; David and Kristina Choe; Carson Daly; Abby Duffy; Hogan Family; Kaneris Family; Lippmann Family; Madden Family; Manhasset Board of Education; Manhasset Chamber of Commerce; Shop Manhasset; Caroline and Brad Smith; Steven Yang; and anonymous donors.

Dr. Jonas M. Sokolof, left, and Ken Takahashi had a chance to catch up at the dinner.

Effie Sakellis, right, poses with friends Jim and Kim Gavin at the Luxe photo booth.

Guests enjoyed the fresh mozzarella courtesy of Enrico Sarno of Benvenuti Salumeria.

Nelson Lopez of Farmingdale, left, and Raymond Alvarado of Port Washington are ready to serve at one of the buffet table.

Emily Chamberlain, left, and Erin Hicks emodied the Carnival in Rio theme and also served drinks and led on the dance floor.

There were plenty of raffle prizes for attendees to bid on.

Annika Rhea dazzled on the dance floor.

Roy Davis lights the fires for partner Annika Rhea.

The dance floor was crowded for much of the night.

Mugging for the camera at the Luxe photo booth.

A couple memorializes their attendance at the event.

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