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Making Waves is our salute to the residents, businesses and organizations of Southwest Florida's island coast who make the community special

RAISING MILLIONS

In the wake of Hurricane Irma, the Naples Winter Wine Festival has extra motivation

A very special event is returning to Southwest Florida this January. The Naples Winter Wine Festival raises millions of dollars every year, helping underprivileged and at-risk children while bringing the community together in ways that very few charity events can replicate. Since its inception in 2001, the festival has raised more than \$161 million for children in need.

Organizers tell TOTI Media that while the spirit of the event remains the same, they are approaching this year's festival with more motivation than ever before. "In light of Hurricane Irma, more children are in need of the support generated each year through the Naples Winter Wine Festival," they say. "Giving back to the children of Collier County has taken on a whole new meaning while the community works to bounce back from the devastating effects of Irma."

Funds raised by the Naples Winter Wine Festival go directly to the Naples Children & Education Foundation (NCEF). This year's "Fund a Need" initiative is focused on hunger, as well as oral health for children. The goal is for at-risk and underprivileged children to be able to attend school without being worried where their next meal will come from. NCEF would also like to ensure that these children will not be dependent on lower-cost food that's higher in fat, sodium and sugar.

"These initiatives will provide nutritious food, as well as dental care and oral health education, because the prevention of childhood obesity and diseases is vital to long-term health," organizers say.

Each year the festival hosts several Vintner Dinners, which all feature globally recognized vintners, celebrity chefs and master sommeliers who come together to create a once-in-a-lifetime experience for attendees. Another highlight of the three-day charity event is a vibrant live auction, which includes many

special items that wow the audience.

"We have some very exceptional auction lots on the docket this year," organizers tell TOTI Media, such as private wine tastings at wineries and vineyards around the world and international luxury tours. Similar to previous years, one of the most valuable items in 2018 will be automotive.

Two lucky bidders will be the first people in the United States to own a 2019 Bentley Continental GT and 2018 Rolls Royce Phantom VIII. Another car enthusiast will walk away with a McLaren 720S custom designed for the Naples Winter Wine Festival.

All these events center around the yearly "Meet the Kids Day," where festival patrons can see their contributions at work in Collier County. They get a chance to meet the children, chat with them and learn about their lives, dreams and aspirations.

Every dollar raised, as every year, will go to NCEF, directly benefiting the children and improving their lives.



IF YOU GO

When: January 26-28, 2018

Where: Auction takes place at The Ritz-Carlton Golf Resort, Naples. All other events are at various locations around Naples.

For tickets and more information, visit: napleswinefestival.com