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**MARCH OF DIMES "A TASTE FOR LIFE" 9TH ANNUAL SUBURBAN CHEFS' AUCTION
RAISES \$121,000 TO PREVENT PREMATURETY AND INFANT MORTALITY**

Chicago-- It was definitely a night to remember on Thursday, October 28th at the March of Dimes 9th Annual Suburban Chefs' Auction, "A Taste for Life." The event, held at the Signature Room at Seven Bridges, raised an unprecedented \$121,000, which is a significant increase from the \$81,000 raised last year. More than 500 guests and 22 of the western suburbs premier restaurants came together to support the March of Dimes mission to prevent birth defects, prematurity and infant mortality. Guests sampled the chefs' signature dishes prepared especially for the evening, bid on unique silent auction items and participated in a live auction. Popular radio personalities Ric Federighi from WLUP-FM, "The Loop," and co-owner of WJOB-AM and WIMS-AM, and Marti Jones from Shadow/Metro Broadcast Services were the evening's hosts.

The "auction item" that raised the most money was the "Fund-A-Mission." Guests listened to Laurie Knecht, from Lombard, IL tell her story about the challenges she faced when her son Cory Chance Knecht was born premature at Central DuPage Hospital two years ago. Then everyone was invited to pledge a donation at one of several giving levels. All of these donations will go directly to fund March of Dimes research efforts to prevent premature births. The bidding was enthusiastic and generous, raising more than \$15,000.

The highest bid auction items of the evening were a dinner at Maggiano's in Oak Brook for 14 (\$1,725), a San Juan Puerto Rico vacation package with airline tickets and a stay at the Caribe Hilton Hotel (\$1,550), and a Chicago Cubs Fan's Dream Package with tickets to a spring training game in Phoenix and airline tickets for two (\$1,500).

"Special thanks to Neal and Sherry Halleran of Wheaton, the event co-chairs, and the many wonderful volunteers who made this event happen. Because of their dedication and hard work, the night was a fantastic success," said Gail Wilson, State Director for the March of Dimes Illinois Chapter.

All proceeds benefit the March of Dimes, a national voluntary health agency whose mission is to improve the health of babies by preventing birth defects and infant mortality. Founded in 1938, the March of Dimes funds programs of research, community services, education and advocacy to save babies and in 2003 launched a five-year campaign to address the increasing rate of premature birth.

