

Local adoption agency plans June 30 Casino Gala fundraiser

By Kelly D'Anna

No need to sit in traffic on the Parkway on the way to Atlantic City this summer — Point Pleasant Beach's Downey Side Adoption Agency is hosting its Forever Family Casino Gala on Thursday, June 30.

The eighth annual benefit gala for Downey Side Families For Youth event will be hosted at the Crystal Point Yacht Club, located at 3900 River Road in Point Pleasant.

A buffet dinner will be served from 6 to 7:30 p.m., with an open bar from 6 to 7 p.m., followed by a cash bar.

Gaming tables open at 6:30 p.m., with games such as poker, black jack, craps and roulette available.

Games of chance will also be an option for guests, and include a wine toss, balloon raffle, 50/50 and more.

Professional dealers will be present to assist those new to the world of table games.

A gift auction and a silent auction will also be held.

Gifts to be auctioned off include two flat-screen televisions, a Tom Tom Global Positioning System [GPS], a weekend ski trip to Stowe, Vt., a sunny getaway to the Yucatan Peninsula in Mexico that includes a rental car, a week-long stay at a condominium in Florida, a weekend in New York City that includes dinner at Sarabeth's Kitchen, leather luggage, a beach cruiser bike, free dinners at many local restaur-

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**— Kate Gioglio
Downey Side Adoption
Agency, on significance of
fundraisers like Casino Gala**

rants and tickets to Broadway plays.

"It's really a nice selection of gifts," said the Downey Side's Kate Gioglio, who is co-chairing the event alongside Allison Donahue. "There is something for everyone.

"Local merchants have been very generous," Ms. Donahue added.

For the price of \$75, guests will receive \$50 in complimentary gaming chips, dinner and buffet-style dessert, as well as the one-hour open bar.

Proceeds from the benefit event will aid in the agency's efforts to find "forever homes" for older children awaiting adoption.

Downey Side Adoption Agency is a national adoption agency exclusively devoted to recruiting families for youth aged 7 to 17 who need permanent homes.

The agency started in 1967 in Springfield, Mass. when the Rev. Paul Engel helped place a 17-year-old boy in the home of Margaret Downey.

"He saw how placing the child in the home changed their life for the better, and the agency started," said volunteer Pat Marcinak. "[The agency] then began placing hard-to-place children in homes. The motto is, 'Every child deserves a forever family.'"

According to Ms. Gioglio, Downey Side Adoption Agency places children who are older, and currently in foster care around the country, in stable family situations.

"The average age is about 9, but we usually say [the average is] between ages 7 through 17," Ms. Gioglio said. "These are children who are in foster homes all over the country, and we place them into permanent homes."

The agency currently has locations in New Jersey, New York, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Kansas, Missouri and Minnesota.

The eighth annual gala is the biggest event of the year for the Point Pleasant Beach location, Ms. Gioglio said. However, the local Downey Side agency also hosts various fundraisers throughout the year.

According to Ms. Gioglio, all the proceeds from the biggest

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fundraising event of the year go toward the agency as whole.

"[We have] seven offices in this country, so the money is used for the agency's mission, not specifically for this location," Ms. Gioglio said.

"This office [Point Pleasant Beach] is working with families from New Jersey who would like to adopt children, and we need the funds to support it," Ms. Gioglio said.

"We charge the least amount of money, and are among the

cheapest of private agencies in the entire country," she said. "We try to keep the cost down for families through these fundraisers.

"It's really important to us to keep the cost down so that any family can come here and get the personal attention of a private agency without spending a lot of money," she continued.

Tickets for the Casino Gala must be purchased in advance by calling the main office, located at 420 Richmond Avenue [Route 35 South] in Point Pleasant Beach, at 732-295-5600, or by visiting the office.