

VEGAS



CARRIE ROCKS

AT THE ACADEMY OF COUNTRY MUSIC AWARDS

CELEBRATE EARTH DAY WITH THE CITY'S TOP GREEN CHEFS

PLUS Oscar Goodman, Clint Holmes, Robin Antin

Muto treats her ECF scholars to a meal
Julian Serrano

one child at a time

ELIZABETH MUTO'S OWN STORY DRIVES HER WORK AWARDING SCHOLARSHIPS EVERY SPRING AT THE EPICUREAN CHARITABLE FOUNDATION. AS TOLD TO MARK ADAMS

“My parents taught me that it's not always most important to know what you are, but to know *who* you are—and not be afraid to accept that. This lesson was especially important considering my humble entrance into the world.

Abandoned as an infant, I was found at the Delta ticket counter at the Reno-Tahoe International Airport and brought to the lost and found (because apparently that's where you take babies *and* lost luggage). After no one claimed me, I was sent to a hospital and adopted. I absolutely believe my story can serve as a catalyst for me to make a difference in the lives of children like me—to tell them that you don't have to be perfect or come from perfect beginnings to make a difference.

That's why I have devoted my life to supporting children's charities. After working with Boys Town for about five years, I decided what I really

wanted was to throw my rock in a puddle, rather than an ocean. I wanted to be able to see the ripple effect, to see that I was making a measurable difference. That puddle ended up being the Epicurean Charitable Foundation (ECF), which I joined in 2009 as the executive director. Here I'm able to develop industry leaders.

The ECF is composed of about 30 hospitality industry leaders. We give charitable grants to the Las Vegas community, but the heart and soul of our organization is always our scholarship program that places graduates at the mid-management level. There is always a lack of qualified applicants for those positions and we're helping to fill those openings.

As a former Miss Nevada, I applied what I learned from the Miss America scholarship program to make this the best program possible. The

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SPIRIT OF GENEROSITY

Muto says mentoring students is what makes the ECF program unique.



A crowning achievement: Muto becomes Miss Nevada 2004.

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ECF combines three things I am so passionate about: scholarship, education, and mentorship. The mentorship aspect really makes us unique. Students meet one-on-one with industry leaders at least once a month, creating a support system to ensure their academic and professional success. The students think it's cool that they can call a vice

president of food and beverage on their cell phone. We've had students who struggled with their accounting homework and were connected with the CFO of Mirage to benefit from that real-world knowledge.

About 90 percent of our students are first-generation college students, so they are not always able to rely on family members to help them with homework and projects. That's where we come in. One student said it best: 'There's a thin line between family and ECF.' We have a 100 percent success rate at placing our graduates at the mid-management level. We have former students doing incredible things in the community, and then they come back to mentor our current students. It really is similar to being a family in that you're in it for life. We've selected our ECF scholarship recipients for next year and will announce them at our May board meeting at the Flamingo.

The media may label today's youth as 'the video game generation,' but I have hope. Young people are ambitious, focused, philanthropic, and civic-minded. They give back because they were given so much. They know they have that obligation. That's what I get from them—the idea that the future is going to be OK because we're leaving it in capable hands. They inspire me and teach me every day." 702-932-5098; ecfn.com **V**

Charity Register

OPPORTUNITIES TO GIVE

CELEBRITY POKER TOURNAMENT

Event: Enjoy a friendly game of no-limit Texas Hold 'Em and spectacular raffle prizes alongside celebrities and poker pros to benefit Opportunity Village. \$300 buy-in.

Details: April 7, 1 PM, Caesars Palace Poker Room, 702-880-4096; opportunityvillage.org

GOVERNOR'S BLACK TIE INVITATIONAL

Event: In honor of the Fletcher Jones family of fine dealerships, Governor Brian Sandoval, along with Garry Goett of Southern Highlands, hosts a weekend affair to benefit a variety of charities throughout Southern Nevada. Last year's Invitational raised nearly \$800,000.

Details: April 12-14, Southern Highlands Golf Club, 702-263-1000



TAKING OFF THE MASK

Event: The Hands of Comfort Foundation hosts its second annual gala and masquerade ball, hosted by Patrina Wisdom, to raise funds for suicide awareness and prevention for those affected by sudden trauma and emotional distress.

Details: April 28, Meet Las Vegas, 233 S. Fourth St.; handsofcomfortfoundation.org

GIRLS NIGHT OUT

Event: Join Dana Sporn and Friends of the Shade Tree at its 10th annual Girls Night Out benefit to support the shelter for physically abused and homeless women and children.

Details: May 3, 6:30 PM, Hyde at Bellagio; friendsoftheshadetre.net



RACE FOR THE CURE

Event: Run or walk (or just sponsor someone who does) in this 5K race to

raise funds for breast cancer treatment and research, organized by the Susan G. Komen for the Cure organization.

Details: May 5, Downtown Las Vegas at the Fremont Street Experience; komensouthernnevada.org

JDRF'S HOPE GALA

Event: Honoring Mandalay Bay executive Bill Hornbuckle, the annual Hope Gala benefits JDRF's search for a cure for type 1 diabetes. The evening includes a cocktail reception, dinner, silent auction, and musical entertainment.

Details: May 11, Mandalay Bay Resort & Casino, 702-732-4794; jdrflv.org



THE HEART BALL

Event: Enjoy an evening in old Las Vegas and celebrate survival at the American Heart Association's annual fundraising event benefiting research, public education, and community programs.

Details: May 19, The Mirage Hotel & Casino, 702-367-1366; lvheartball.org

HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGN GALA

Event: Join more than 500 guests to celebrate and support the nation's largest civil rights organization working to achieve equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender Americans.

Details: May 19, 6 PM, Wynn Las Vegas; hrc.org

PARTY WITH A PURPOSE

Event: Co-chaired by UNLV's Coach Dave Rice, the American Cancer Society's Coaches vs. Cancer fundraiser will feature an in-house basketball court where fans can compete against their favorite coaches and past players in a Hot Shot Shootout Challenge.

Details: May 20, 5 PM, Bellagio; cancer.org

