

## CHARITY SPOTLIGHT

### Corona del Mar Resident Lucie Courtois Shares Inspirational Message at Beyond Blindness Gala

BY CHRISTOPHER TRELA | NB INDY

Beyond Blindness, the region's leading provider of early intervention, education and enrichment, and family support services for children with visual impairments and other disabilities, hosted its seventh annual Vision Beyond Sight Gala on Feb. 29 at Mile Square Golf Course in Fountain Valley.

With the support of more than 200 guests, the event raised more than \$240,000 to fund and build bright futures for children and families in Orange County.

Held for the first time on a weeknight, the 2024 gala took place on Rare Disease Day in recognition of Beyond Blindness' commitment to empowering children of all abilities to live full and rewarding lives.

Beyond Blindness key speaker Lucie Courtois of Corona del Mar has received services from Beyond Blindness. She is a graduate of Corona del Mar High School and post high school completed independent skills and academic program at the California School for the Blind.

Lucie completed acting and scriptwriting courses with Inclusion Films by Joey Travolta, and has had private acting lessons from Access Acting in



Corona del Mar resident Lucie Courtois and her mother Carol Trapani at the Beyond Blindness Gala.

preparation of an audition with "All the Light we Cannot See." Lucie currently attends Orange Coast College in the Film School with a focus on her education in writing, film, and entrepreneur programs.

Lucie has developed a blind character and written three spec episodes for a Nickelodeon show that she is submitting for consideration. Her goals are to act and create work that includes all different types of people including people who are blind.

At the event, Courtois spoke about how Beyond Blindness has supported her journey since birth, which includes more

than 20 eye surgeries.

"I have been part of the Beyond Blindness community since birth, but I am really part of two communities," Courtois told the audience. "Yes, I am part of the Blind community, but I am also part of the sighted community. And guess what? So are you. Because so many of you have been part of my community and supported my journey, I can stand her today as a confident young woman."

Courtois went on to say that she is working on fully navigating her Corona del Mar neighborhood, including safely and independently crossing Coast Highway.

"My goal for myself is to qualify to have a guide dog. My goal for my family is to be able to pick up my little cousins, Benjamin and Juliet, from school by myself on the last day of this school year," stated Courtois, who added that "my dreams are much bigger than that though."

In addition to writing a book and several spec scripts, Courtois aims to create work that includes all different types of people, including people who are blind.

"We don't get to see enough people

with disabilities thrive. I want to change that for cast, crews, and fans. I want to tell stories that people can identify with and say, 'Oh, that's me!'"

Courtois acknowledged that Beyond Blindness changed her life in many ways, including giving her the courage and skills to live to her fullest potential.

"There is a reason I focus on telling stories that children can enjoy," she said. "I see children as valuable and equal to me. I am friends with people of all ages and backgrounds. I see everyone as equal. That is my vision beyond sight, and I believe my world is much better for it. Beyond Blindness envisions this world, too, and your support makes it possible for people like me to be equally valued anywhere we go."

Courtois ended her remarks by asking the audience to support other children and young adults who have visual impairments and other disabilities.

"Thank you Beyond Blindness for allowing me to share my story tonight, and thank you to all the supporters here tonight who have poured into my future."

The President of the Beyond Blindness

**Gala**  
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Board of Directors is Newport Beach resident Carol Trapani, Lucie Courtois' mother.

Held for the first time on a weeknight, the 2024 gala took place on Rare Disease Day in recognition of Beyond Blindness' commitment to empowering children of all abilities to live full and rewarding lives. This year's reimagined event, which took place at Mile Square Golf Course in Fountain Valley, also included a VIP experience with World Blind Golf Champion Jeremy Poincenot, who later served as the evening's keynote speaker and spoke about his triumphs and the challenges he faced since losing his sight at age 19.

The event raised more than \$240,000, which will go to supporting nearly 500 children and more than 800 family members each year through innovative programming and services including two new inclusive preschool classrooms and a recently expanded Low Vision Optometry Clinic.

For more information, please visit [www.beyondblindness.org](http://www.beyondblindness.org).

**Pickleball**  
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KidWorks develops students who are:

- Life Ready: Developing the whole person so they can make wise decisions and thrive
- Learners: Educating students so they have a brighter future
- Leaders: Preparing young leaders who make a difference

The outcome is self-reliant young adults who are equipped to succeed in life and are motivated to give back.

For nearly a decade, KidWorks celebrated that almost all of their high school seniors graduated on time and all continued their education.

To learn more about KidWorks and to read its success stories, please visit [www.kidworksoc.org](http://www.kidworksoc.org).

**Theater**  
PAGE 3

Dalton Nguyen and Sean Farrell comically menace as mobsters disguised as pastry chefs, and Mark Wickham enjoyably underplays the role of Underling, the stereotypically British servant.

Director Jones, musical director Kyra Cohen and choreographer Maureen Russell pull together the show's spoken, musical and dance elements, keeping us floating along with the characters.

Through the dozens of photos, playbills and posters on the walls of Man in Chair's home, the design team of Jim Huffman, Joshua Serrano, Michael Corcoran and Leslye Wanthal delivers a virtual shrine to musical theater, and Jenny Wentworth's costumes and Kat Scott's wigs re-create the look of a full-blown late '20s musical.

In Newport Beach, though, it really all comes down to Spencer, a superb actor who has graced countless Orange County stages for many years.

**Spirit Run**  
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To learn more about Spirit Run, visit: <https://www.newportspiritrun.org/>.

According to information from the Spirit Run website, from 1983-2010, Spirit Run was presented by PTAs from five Newport Beach elementary schools which shared its net proceeds.

In 2010, Newport-Mesa Spirit Run, Inc. (NMSRI), a California 501(c)(3) nonprofit, was founded to continue Spirit Run and share its net proceeds with schools throughout the Newport-Mesa Unified School District.

Also, since 2017, any school, youth sport, or youth cause may apply to fundraise with us.

NMSRI's Board of Directors are unpaid, volunteers dedicated to continuing Spirit Run, youth fitness, providing free event entries to underprivileged students, and donating event net proceeds to participating schools, youth sports, and other youth causes.

So far, more than \$370,000 in cash has been donated to schools, sports teams, and other youth causes.

**Pascal**  
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culinary arts students in Orange County. Working with Saddleback College Culinary Arts Program, the program focuses on making an impact for culinary students showing a financial need and that are currently enrolled in classes and meet the GPA criteria. The goal is to provide scholarships to as many deserving students as possible each year.

Venue Host for the event was Chef Paul Bauer, Renaissance Newport Beach. Honorary Chef was Kyung Carroll, The Resort at Pelican Hill Chef. The Scholarship Chair was Pascal Olhats. The title sponsor was Mary Murfey.

For more information, visit [www.Tableforten.org](http://www.Tableforten.org).

Man in Chair is a vulnerable focal figure who gradually opens himself up to us and who exults in and is mesmerized by each successive musical number, and Spencer superbly embodies his character's preference to immerse himself in the world of theater versus contending with life.

The actor expertly gradates the intensity levels of Man in Chair, which satisfyingly offsets the frivolity of the show within this show.

As such, isn't Man in Chair just a bit like any of us who love great musical theater? "The Drowsy Chaperone" is a fantasy framed by reality that proves, at NTAC and elsewhere, that we can have both.

Newport Theatre Arts Center, 2501 Cliff Drive, Newport Beach. Through April 14. Running time: One hour, 45 minutes (no intermission). 7:30 p.m. Thu.-Sat., 2 p.m. Sun. Tickets: \$30. Ticket purchase / information: 949-631-0288, [www.ntaonline.com](http://www.ntaonline.com).

## THE COACH HOUSE

[www.thecoachhouse.com](http://www.thecoachhouse.com)

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