Hearts of Gold presented by Reed Nissan raises over $246,000 in Celebration of 30 Years of Hope

ORLANDO, Fla. (Tuesday, May 16) – On Friday, May 12, more than 600 local business leaders and philanthropists gathered at Hard Rock Live to celebrate Coalition for the Homeless of Central Florida’s 30th anniversary at the organization’s annual Hearts of Gold concert event presented by Reed Nissan. By the end of the night, the event raised more than $246,000 in support of the Coalition’s mission to help individuals and families find their way home with a focus on securing income and housing.

Hearts of Gold, now in its 24th year, has earned a reputation for spectacular live entertainment and a fun, casual atmosphere – all for a great cause. Guests are encouraged to relax and enjoy the lively reception, complete with complimentary food and drinks, a silent auction, a selfie booth, and pre-show entertainment. Proceeds from the evening benefit the Coalition’s programs and services, which helped more than 1,019 individuals move to permanent housing in the past year alone.

In a brief video message before the concert, Orlando Mayor Buddy Dyer congratulated the Coalition on 30 years of serving the Central Florida community. Aaron Hill, General Manager of presenting sponsor Reed Nissan, then took the stage to welcome guests to Hearts of Gold and introduce Fernando Varela. Varela, an internationally acclaimed tenor and Universal recording artist, served not only as the evening’s host but also as a performer. Throughout the show, he introduced homegrown talent including the Atlantic City Boys, The Beu Sisters, Justin Sargent, and Omar Cardona, who took turns wowing the crowd with hits songs ranging from Franki Vallie classics to the Dixie Chicks to Bruno Mars.

John E. Hearn, Coalition President/CEO, took a moment to thank those who made the event – and the Coalition’s 30 years – possible. As the event’s presenting sponsor, Reed Nissan topped the list, followed by the corporate sponsors: 4 Rivers Smokehouse and The Coop, Walt Disney World, HomeMaker Premium Orange Juice, Orlando Regional Realtor Association, PNC Bank, Publix Super Market Charities, Universal Orlando and Vistana Signature Experiences. He also thanked the many community and supporting sponsors, media sponsor WFTV 9 Family Connection, as well as local advertising partners, the generous local businesses that donated to the silent auction, and the dedicated volunteers who gave their time.

Tracy Virgo, a former client, shared a powerful testimony, thanking the Coalition and all of its supporters for helping her and her 2-year-old daughter, Ava, find hope and overcome homelessness. Tracy was presented a bouquet of flowers from Ava as the crowd rose in standing ovation.

Moved by the moment, Fernando challenged the audience to raise $30,000 during his next song. As he began an emotional rendition of Coldplay’s “Fix You,” faces of hundreds of the Coalition’s former clients appeared behind him. Within minutes, donors surpassed the goal and raised $31,230, making Coalition history.
In true celebratory fashion, Hearts of Gold closed with a shower of confetti and a dance party. After all, the evening was a celebration of the past 30 years and the nearly 120,000 lives the Coalition has touched; a celebration of the generosity of the Central Florida community; and a celebration of what's to come.

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About Coalition for the Homeless of Central Florida

Since 1987, Coalition for the Homeless of Central Florida has transformed the lives of homeless men, women and children by providing crucial services to end their crisis of homelessness. Each night, the Coalition serves more than 500 individuals, including an average of 140 children. In the past year, 1,019 of our clients moved on from one of our programs to permanent housing. For more information, visit www.centralfloridahomeless.org.