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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**STAR Annual Gala Raises over \$275,000
For Neighbors with Developmental Disabilities in Fairfield County**

On Saturday, November 6, over 160 guests attended the 19th Annual Fundraising Gala and Auction to benefit STAR, Inc., Lighting the Way. The event, held at Woodway Country Club in Darien, Connecticut, raised over \$275,000 for programs helping people impacted by intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and their families in Fairfield County.

This magical and awesome evening celebrated the return of the in-person STAR Gala to celebrate with friends, old and new, who eagerly connected and generously raised their paddles in support of our neighbors with unique abilities.

Guests enjoyed cocktails, delectable hors d'oeuvres, and a bountiful dinner. They left with a parting gift of coffee roasted for STAR by Solude Air Roasted Coffee of Norwalk and cookies courtesy of Michaels Joseph's Catering. Heartwarming testimonials by STAR participants, family members and friends were the highlight of the event as they described the impact STAR donors make on their lives. "It is because of our friends at STAR, that Matt and I see a bright future for our sons, Auggie and Bear, even on the hardest days. I look at my two boys in wonder and awe, in gratitude and love. I know that we have been blessed twice, not just with two children but *these* two boys and every gift they have given to our lives and will give to the world. We are humbled, daily; to know that we have been chosen to provide them with all the opportunities they need to live a healthy and meaningful life.

We had hoped for carefree, for a life without challenges for our boys. Perhaps we did not get carefree...but with STAR in our lives, we absolutely get to focus on the joy. And I will be forever grateful.”~ Casey Stisser, Darien.

The chairpersons of the gala committee were Rob and Meghan Cioffi of **New Canaan** and Joseph and Nella Viesta of **Stamford**. STAR’s board President, Meghan Cioffi of New Canaan, hosted the evening with Executive Director Katie Banzhaf. Ms.Banzhaf, shared, “What a wonderful night we had to benefit STAR’s programs and to celebrate being back in person again. We are grateful for the tremendous generosity of our guests, sponsors, auction donors and volunteers. It was truly an inspirational, memorable and fun evening.”

Professional auctioneer CK Swett led the live auction that included one-of-a-kind experiences such as four VIP house seats to any Broadway show, a five-course catered dinner with wine pairings and flowers for ten guests by renowned local chef, Jonathan Mathias of Dash of Salt Catering, and a catered lobster bake at your home from Ripka’s Beach Café with music by DJ Joe. Sports enthusiasts bid on VIP tickets to a Jets Game and the opportunity to play a round of golf at the club of their choice with hall of famer and professional caddy for Tiger Woods, Joe LaCava.

Guests bid on over 30 chic and unique silent auction items that included rounds of golf at prestigious clubs such as The Stanwich Club in Greenwich and Winged Foot Country Club in Westchester, a Maserati for the weekend, a seven-day vacation to Tuscany, stylish fashion from Helen Ainson in Darien, and sausage-making class with ten friends at Darien Butcher Shop coupled with ten bottles of Clyde Mays bourbon.

Generous event sponsors included People’s United Insurance Agency, Fairfield County Bank, Prospect Hill Foundation, Sandy Hill Foundation, Ring’s End, Inc., CCS Fundraising, Meghan and Robert Cioffi, Joanna Galvin and Adrian Sisser, Ali and Doug Milne, Julie and Peter Moeller, Nella and Joe Viesta, The Wiegner Group, Assured Partners, Caroleigh and Win Evarts, People’s United Bank and Wells Fargo Advisors. In-kind sponsors were Compo Farms, Miggs B

Design, Matt Glass, Michael Joseph's Catering, Paul's Prosperous Printing, PCI Creative Group, JVB Designs, Solude Air Roasted Coffee and Woodway Country Club.

STAR, Inc., Lighting the Way is a not-for-profit organization established in 1952 to serve individuals of all ages who have intellectual and developmental disabilities, as well as providing support services to their families. STAR creates opportunities for individuals to live full lives with independence, freedom of choice and personal growth by providing support, services and advocacy. Headquartered in Norwalk with offices in New Canaan and Darien, STAR annually serves over 600 individuals from birth through their senior years in Fairfield County. STAR informs and encourages the community to recognize and appreciate the value of all individuals. STAR promotes inclusion for people of all abilities. For more information visit www.starct.org

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