

## CENTERPORT

# Maggie's Mission Celebrates 'Angelversary' With Gala

By Aila Nikolic

supervised by Kenley Stevenson

To have your soul touched by someone you have never met is something entirely unique and wonderful. Maggie was a Harborfields student who passed away at the age of just 17, during her junior year of high school. She was battling a cancer known as Malignant Rhabdoid Tumors (MRT). Loved ones say the young woman was strong, adventurous, unique, full of life, and had one strong personality.

A gala was held on June 3 at the Vanderbilt Museum not only to celebrate Maggie's life but to raise money for MRT treatment research. Maggie's father, Steve Schmidt, told a story about how he, Maggie, his son Steven, and his wife Donna DeSousa, went camping one day.

"She had gotten bitten up by bugs and she later reflected and said to me, 'Dad it was a really rough trip but looking back it was the best time ever.'" She saw the world from a different perspective than others might and always looked on the bright side.

They chose June 3 as her Angelversary gala as she grew her own angel wings on June 1, 2017. The gala was held at the Vanderbilt Museum in Centerport, where over 300 people gathered to raise money for better treatment options for MRT.

Donna DeSousa-Schmidt (Maggie's mom), Briana DiPardo, Joan Motherway, and Samantha Laterza put together the spectacular evening under the stars. Guests enjoyed food,



Attendees at a fundraising gala held June 3 at the Vanderbilt Museum wore white in honor of Maggie Schmidt, left, who died at age 16 of a rare and aggressive cancer. The event raised funds for Maggie's Mission, a foundation established in her name to fund research.



drinks, the Illuminate string quartet, and much more, all to raise money and celebrate the life of Maggie. To honor the young angel, all attendees wore white to the event.

Maggie's Mission began when she was diagnosed with MRT. After she passed, her family set out to make sure no other families had to see a loved one fight such a tough battle. They work to find new ways to raise money and create new fundraisers, such as blood drives, Maggie's Mile, and S'mores for more, where all funds raised going to research.

Several sponsors support the effort, including Margin Electric, Friends of Thomas, and American Capital Partners. Maggie's doctor, Dr. Alex Kentsis, along with his lab, are leaders in discovering better treatment options for MRT. Dr. Kentsis gave a speech at the Angelversary Gala, as well as Jamie Wrede, who was diagnosed with Osteosarcoma in 2014.

"The pediatric floor of the hospital was such a safe place...



Maggie's family, from left, Steve Schmidt, Donna DeSousa Schmidt, and Steven Thomas Schmidt

So many kids did not get the cures they deserve," said Wrede. "These children deserve to grow old and see what life has to offer, but there are currently not enough treatments to cure these diseases."

Donna made a toast that night, saying, "If you have ever witnessed children suffering you know why we are here... it's a celebration of Maggie's life and life in general which none of us should take for

granted." Maggie's family shows how beautiful of a person she was.

They have created an amazing organization that is trying to end the suffering and pain of those like Maggie. If you are part of Maggie's Mission you are part of something that is trying to give life. You can donate, volunteer, or become a sponsor by going to [maggiesmission.org](http://maggiesmission.org) or reaching out to [info@maggiesmission.org](mailto:info@maggiesmission.org).



Some volunteers and guests wore wings to honor the young angel