Points of Light Gala Shines

Under the glass ceiling of the Italian Embassy, with strings of light shimmering overhead, 250 special guests came together to celebrate the winners of the 2013 Points of Light Tribute Awards.

Greta Van Susteren of Fox News and Italian actress Elisabetta Canalis emceed the Oct. 11 event, hosted by The Ambassador of Italy, Claudio Bisogniero and his wife, Laura Denise Bisogniero. Acclaimed singer Pia Toscano, best known for her impressive debut on "American Idol," serenaded the guests with her signature hit, “I'll Stand by You.”

Neil Bush, Points of Light’s board chairman, praised the awardees for exemplifying what his father, President George H. W. Bush, sees as the nation’s strengths – people who serve others and a “respect for the goodness that makes this country great.”

The Tribute Awards honor individuals and organizations whose extraordinary contributions to volunteering and service have made their communities and the world better, and have inspired others. New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie, one of the four honorees, accepted his award by expressing gratitude to volunteers.

“Thank you all for what you do every day,” said Christie, who was recognized for his role as a tireless advocate for New Jersey citizens dealing with Hurricane Sandy’s devastation. “People around this entire country never know when we’re going to need you. But when we do, it’s an extraordinary relief to know that you’ll be there to help people in need.”

The other Tribute Award winners included:

• Amy Paterson, as a young mom fighting breast cancer, found it tough to get sitters for her children during her medical appointments. She’s making it easier for others with My Little Waiting Room, the nation’s first drop-in hospital child care center, in Portland, Oregon.

• AmpleHarvest.org connects 40 million Americans who have excess food in their gardens to local food pantries that serve the hungry in all 50 states. (The nonprofit’s founder Gary Oppenheimer accepted the award.)

• Citi, the leading global bank recognized by The Civic 50 as one of the nation’s most community-minded corporations, mobilizes its business resources and human capital to expand financial inclusion, strengthen communities and advance environmental sustainability. (Francesco Vanni d’Archirafi, CEO of Citi Holdings, accepted the award.)
Live Auction and Online Auction

The Points of Light Tribute Awards live auction featured presidential memorabilia and travel packages that raised more than $138,500 from an enthusiastic crowd.

Bidding continues via a public online auction through October 31, 2013 featuring items such as:

- An enhanced 2014 Fiat 500L designed with highlights to mimic Points of Light’s signature green and blue
- Private Skype session with singer/songwriter Pia Toscano
- Meet-and-greet with Linkin Park
- Plus sports memorabilia, gift certificates and restaurant dinners.

This auction is open to the public at www.biddingforgood.com/pointsoflight/tribute.

Media Highlights

“New Jersey Governor Chris Christie was invited by Points of Light chair Neil Bush to honor his work in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy…. Christie accepted the award on behalf of all the volunteers who stepped up to help his state: ‘If you ever wonder, for a minute, if what you’re doing makes a difference, come to the Jersey shore.’”

– The Washington Post

“Volunteers are all over the nation, every single day, helping. Chances are, you’re a volunteer. And so this night in many ways honors you, too. So take a bow! Regardless of our differences, political or otherwise, we all need to look out for each other.”

– Greta Van Susteren on FOX News