

CLASS OF 2004 PROJECT

SONGWRITERS IN THE ROUND - HISTORY

... *Honorary Chairs* ...

RON HARBISON & MARTY ROGOL

One of Leadership Palm Beach County's alumni, Ron Harbison (Class of 2004), had assisted an inspiring songwriter in organizing 4-6 shows in Tallahassee, Florida. The shows were a huge hit and provided an opportunity for Ron to celebrate his passion for country music. Ron produced his first show on his own in West Palm Beach at the Harriet Theater in 2001.

Fortunately for us, Ron arrived in Palm Beach County and met another alumnus, Marty Rogol (Class of 2004). Marty is well known for his production of "We are the World", an extraordinary event! Once Marty learned about the songwriters events in Tallahassee and West Palm Beach, he asked Ron if they could produce one together for the 2004 class project. At a dinner meeting with the Class of 2004, it was agreed that the class would organize a songwriters event. As Marty describes it, without truly understanding the full scope of what needed to be done and how it would get done, the class jumped on the idea and organized a sold out event making money that very first year and every year thereafter! Posters were sold during the first event, however they found that the audience was more interested in purchasing the CDs produced by the songwriters.

Each songwriter is uniquely talented. In the early years, the songwriters conducted workshops at either Dreyfoos or G-Star. When asked by the students what the single most important thing they could do to become a great songwriter, the resounding answer was, "Read, Read, Read"! They also added that to be a great songwriter you had to be honest with yourself and open with your emotions when you write.

After the 2004 success, the then President of the Leadership Palm Beach County board, Tony Lofaso, asked Marty and Ron if the songwriters event could be an annual fundraiser. An agreement was made with one caveat...Leadership Palm Beach County was asked to put in place a strategic planning process. Reaching out to another alumna, Rita Craig (Class of 1986) offered her consulting services and a process was put in place and remains today.

The Songwriters in the Round has been held every year since 2004 except one. It has always been at the Harriet which is a special location that's intimate and provides the songwriters with a chance to talk about their songwriting expertise and to perform enormously successful songs. We are forever grateful to Patti Dean from Roger Dean Chevrolet for her

ongoing commitment as Presenting Sponsor for all 8 years. The songwriter who played an instrumental role in arranging the Palm Beach County event in the beginning years was Kent Blazy. Unfortunately, his wife was ill and he turned all his attention to her and the coordination role was turned over to Leslie Satcher. Leslie has continued to arrange an amazing group of songwriters each year and she does a brilliant job in producing a good time for all. Thanks to Kent and Leslie the songwriters in our shows have always been at the top of the "food chain" of songwriters in Nashville. They are not merely successful songwriters, but writers who have each written multiple number one hits and some who have won Grammys for their work.

The 2004 class members served as the Songwriters in the Round Committee for years later rotating committee members from later classes. They planned a pre-event for key sponsors each year with the 2011 event hosted at a private home on Singer Island and sponsored by another alumna, Dari Bowman (Class of 1988). It gave sponsors a chance to get to know the songwriters and to honor them for their support.

The event continues to focus on its initial goal of being a fundraiser predominately for the Youth Program and to provide a good time for all with a limited agenda. Moving forward, the committee is working hard to protect the integrity of the event and what makes it unique.

