



## 2018 Firefly Gala Shatters All Previous Records

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What started out as a small dinner of approximately 250 guests just six years ago has quickly **grown into one of Denver's top charitable events of the spring.** *Laugh Yourself Blue* is the annual fundraising gala for Firefly Autism and the results from the 2018 incarnation of this fun event show why it is on its way to becoming **one of the top events of the entire year.**

On Thursday, April 12, **800 guests** gathered at the **Seawell Ballroom** in the Denver Performing Arts Complex for an evening of celebration, inspiration and laughter, and were treated to **two hilarious stand-up comics, Karen Mills and Michael McCreary.** Mills has been keeping audiences in stitches for nearly 25 years, and closed the show with a set of smart, clean comedy. McCreary, who has Asperger's, is known as The Aspie Comic and includes his disorder in his act, using it as a way to help educate and entertain his audiences. His tag line is, "Does this make my Asperger's look big?" Both were huge hits with the audience.

A tradition of *Laugh Yourself Blue* are the **Firefly Luminescence Awards**, recognizing local community members for their efforts that have benefited the autism community in some way. This year's recipients were: **Community Impact Award, The Tafoya Family; Lighting Up Lives Award**, given each year to a Firefly staff member, **Elyse Murrin; Children's Advocacy Award**, representatives from the **Boulder District Attorneys Office, The Longmont Police Department**, and the **Law Offices of Rathod & Mohamedbhai** for their work in prosecuting a case involving a school bus aide who had repeatedly assaulted a Firefly student. That story was one of the **highlights of the evening**, told through an **emotional and inspiring video** called, "Shiva's Story," and leaving hardly a dry eye in the entire ballroom.

Guests were also treated to the **continuation of a new tradition** introduced at the 2017 gala, a compelling story done in the cadence and rhyming style of Dr. Seuss. The poem, written and presented by Dave Sevick, Firefly's VP of Marketing & Development, **focuses on the unique, daily challenges of children** who live in a mysterious land called **The Spectrum.** The collection of poems will be **published later this year as a children's book**, with proceeds being donated to Firefly.

Before the evening drew to a close, a **paddle raiser fundraising appeal** helped to inaugurate the first phase of a new capital campaign that will officially launch this fall, and will help Firefly **raise funds to build a new, state-of-the-art treatment facility.** A **\$100,000 challenge** was announced at the start of the paddle raiser, issued by **The Salah Foundation** as part of a matching grant program. But guests did far better than to simply meet the challenge. They **exceeded it by nearly a two-to-one margin.** The final tally of funds raised from the event is expected to top **half a million dollars**, making this the **most successful fundraiser** in the history of the organization with **new records** set for **number of sponsorships, tickets and tables sold, number of guests in attendance, and total revenue.**

**About Firefly Autism.** *Firefly Colorado's leader in the treatment of children and families living with autism. Since its inception in 2003, Firefly has transformed the lives of thousands of children and families through a variety of innovative, unique, evidence-based programs and services. Their dedicated and specially-trained clinical staff employs Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) practices for both in-clinic and home-based services programs. More information can be found on their website at [www.fireflyautism.org](http://www.fireflyautism.org).*