

A Triangle Tradition Turns 25

By Brian Van Norman

Longtime Triangle tradition, *A Toast to the Triangle*[™], celebrates its silver anniversary on March 7, 2010. For a quarter-century, area residents have been enjoying the *Toast's* culinary delicacies and enchanting atmosphere, all while supporting a great cause—helping children and adults with special needs. This year's event will be held at the North Carolina State University McKimmon Center in Raleigh from 5:30 p.m. to 8 p.m.

In 1986, the first *Toast* raised \$6,000 to help build residential facilities. Since then, it has evolved into the signature fundraising event for the Tammy Lynn Memorial Foundation, which in turn supports the following programs and services of the Tammy Lynn Center for Developmental Disabilities: Community Residential, Early Childhood Intervention, Respite Care, and non-Medicaid Day Services. Last year, nearly 1,200 guests attended the event, helping to raise more than \$191,000.

Angela Hampton, ABC11/WTVD news anchor, is serving as honorary chair for this year's *Toast*. "I have a special place in my heart for Tammy Lynn Center," says Hampton. "The children and the caring staff have made an impression on me, and the Triangle is lucky to have such an amazing facility for children with developmental disabilities and their families."

The *Toast*, which offers guests samples from nearly 40 of the Triangle's finest restaurants, caterers and purveyors of fine wines and specialty beers, features a friendly competition among participating restaurants. Six "Best in Show" awards are given each year: *People's Choice Award*, *Best Visual Theme*, *Best First Course*, *Best Entrée*, *Best Dessert* and *Best Presentation*.

All restaurant participants are eligible for the *People's Choice Award*, in which guests vote for their favorite restaurant. The remaining awards are voted on by local judges from professions ranging from chefs to food critics to culinary instructors. In celebration of the 25th anniversary, event organizers are adding a pastry competition.

Adding to the excitement of the evening is a live and a silent auction, as well as raffles with prizes including: vacation packages, artwork, jewelry, sporting gifts and more. All auction and raffle items are donated by organizations from throughout the Triangle. "The outpouring of support from area organizations is astounding," says Mary Freeman, president and CEO of the Tammy Lynn Center for Developmental Disabilities. "This sustained support has played an integral role in the growth of the *Toast* and the Tammy Lynn Center."

Event and ticket information for the 2010 *A Toast to the Triangle* is available online at www.atoasttothetriangle.org.

Brian Van Norman is a freelance writer and public relations specialist for Articulon. He can be reached at brian@articulon.com.