

Good evening, my name is Stephanie Nelen, and I along with the rest of the Angel Network Fundraising team and Board would like to welcome you to the 4th annual Angel Network Gala. I'd like to thank the Angle Network committees. They volunteer much of their time to help make this foundation a success.

The Angel Network would like to take this opportunity to thank the Otesaga for all their donations and for hosting this event each year. I would also like to give a shout out our to DJ Justin, and Deanie over at the photobooth. Both of them were so kind to donate 100% of their services! Please take the time to look at all the amazing sponsors and donors on our slide show when you get a chance.

About 14 years ago, The Angel Network started with a very small group. A couple of parents recognized that a child in a classroom wasn't going to have cupcakes to share with their classmates to celebrate their birthday because they couldn't afford it. That small group began a mission and after a few years, we worked hard and formed a nonprofit. This organization is unique. When a request goes out for a child in need, we are usually able to fill that request within one day, which is amazing! That means a child does not have to sit in for recess because they can't afford boots or a warm jacket. This is all done confidentially, through a well-oiled system.

This year, I had a student come to see my in the first couple of weeks of school. The student asked me when the backpack program would be starting. The backpack program is another amazing program (sponsored by the Cooperstown Foodbank), which provides a backpack full of food for a child in need to take home each weekend. I told the student it would not be starting until around the second week in October. He explained he was hungry and his family was in need of food. Immediately, the Angel Network was able to provide food, clothing and shoes to the child in need for the few weeks until the backpack program started. This family was struggling to be able to get to the foodbank due to car issues and expenses, so we were able to bridge that gap and provide for this family. This student began to find his smile again and come to me each day to tell me how thankful they were! You see, learning in school becomes secondary when a child is just trying to survive. Instead of concentrating on the lesson being taught, a child in need is thinking about their next meal, how they are going to stay warm and how their family is going to be able to pay their rent. The Angel Network is able to

take a lot of burden and worry away from these students so they are able to be successful in school.

It is hard for us to believe when we look around at our incredible little village of Cooperstown, that kids are going without. Living a life of deprivation without access to the basics can cause lasting damage to a child. It can mean doing badly in school, feeling isolated and different to their peers, having poor health, and ultimately not getting a job later in life. These children would typically not be able to join the football team or basketball team because they could not afford the right type of shoes. There are many children that would be in our school today without school supplies, proper clothing, snacks, not able to take the SATS or get their driver's license if it wasn't for the Angel Network of Cooperstown.

So much progress has been made and there is a lot to be proud of. But it has not extended far enough. Too many remain trapped in a chain of disadvantaged, and those that do are often the poorest and most socially excluded in our society. The Angel Network is on a mission. We feel we have done and continue to do a great job with meeting student basic needs. Now is the time to take the next step. We want to try to take the cycle of disadvantage as a whole in our community. This means providing experiences for these children. Providing the opportunities for these children to go to summer camps and join after school activities. Do you know that many of these students don't go to after school events or to the Clark gym because of transportation. This is a multi-dimensional challenge- so we must use all the tools at our disposal in a concentrated effort to make this change happen. The Angel Network is in the process of writing grants to help overcome these barriers. We ask you to join us on our challenge and help pave the way for all Cooperstown students to benefit from all the wonderful things this community has to offer.

I recently came across this quote written by Mich Albom. The way you get meaning into your life is to devote yourself to loving others, devote yourself to your community around you, and devote yourself to creating something that gives you purpose and meaning. I immediately thought of The Angel Network of Cooperstown and all the wonderful volunteers, supports and donors. By working together we are making this community a better place to live, especially those children in need.

In the next couple of months, we have a lot to celebrate and be thankful for. I want to thank you all for helping the children and families in need. I get to see these students each week and it warms my heart to know they don't have to go without!

Thank you

Schedule:

Guest arrive at 7:00

Opening speech at 8:00 by Stephanie Nelen

Remind everyone about the silent auction items between 7:00 and 8:50. 8:50 give a warning for the final bid for silent auction items. Bidding will stop at 9:00

9:00 Live Auction start. Chris Olson will be doing the live auction.