



DOVE CENTER
shelter - advocacy - counseling

Press Release

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DOVE Center “Speaks up for change” at Annual Gala with Special Guests Desirae and Deondra Brown

St George, UT – On March 18th, approximately 260 people filled the SunRiver ballroom to honor domestic violence and sexual abuse survivors, and support DOVE Center at its annual fundraising gala. Following the theme “*Speak up for change: Ending sexual and domestic violence one voice at a time*,” this sold out event featured Desirae and Deondra Brown, critically acclaimed pianists and abuse survivors from The 5 Browns. Desirae and Deondra shared their powerful messages of survival and hope, and treated attendees to an inspiring musical performance.

The Annual Gala is a major source of funding for DOVE Center, and this year’s event grossed over \$80,000 via financial donations, ticket sales, and sponsorships. Highlights of the evening included the “Fund A Need” and silent auction, wherein guests donated approximately \$35,000 to help fund specific DOVE services and programs including crisis intervention, safe shelter, relocation assistance, meals, and individual therapy, all of which are provided at no cost to survivors of domestic and sexual violence.

“I couldn’t be more pleased with the event and how the words of Desirae and Deondra, and the story they told through such an emotional musical performance, touched the hearts of so many in attendance,” said DOVE Center Executive Director Lindsey Boyer. “A big thank you goes to Shonie Christensen, Event Chair for 2016 and 2017, and her committee, for raising the bar and giving us the pleasure of providing such an incredible evening for our community.”

The evening began with a reception, social hour, and silent auction followed by dinner and a program. Desirae and Deondra each spoke about their experiences as survivors of childhood sexual abuse, and how they are speaking up for change on behalf of survivors across the country. Through the use of videos and a musical performance, they showed guests how the power of music helped them heal from childhood trauma. The sisters also each shared empowering messages to their fellow survivors:

“To other survivors and those helping them to heal, I have one promise,” said Desirae. “It is worth it. You are not alone. If I could give you any advice right now I would tell every one of you to hold your head high. You have nothing to be ashamed of, the future is yours to choose, and I am proud of you. Hold your head high.”

“Challenges are not what define us,” said Deondra. “It’s our decisions despite them that show who we really are. We can stand up, face our demons head-on, and move forward with hope and optimism for a better future.”

Shonie Christensen, Board Trustee and Gala Event Chair reflected, “I am once again inspired by the generosity of our community. We are grateful to our event sponsors and to everyone that donated their money, goods, services or

time. Thank you, also, to the gala committee for their incredible contributions and hard work to make this year's gala the most successful fund raising event in DOVE's history. Together, our efforts have, once again, provided important resources for the survivors served by DOVE Center's staff."

Although the evening of the Gala has passed, the need continues. Over the past year, DOVE Center's outreach services have increased 50 percent. Donations to help sustain these services are always gratefully accepted at www.dovecenter.org/donate or by contacting the Outreach Office at 435-628-1204.

To learn more about donating and volunteering, or to access information and resources concerning domestic violence, visit www.dovecenter.org or call DOVE's 24-hour helpline, 435-628-0458.

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Note for the editor: DOVE Center is a 501.c.3 not-for-profit organization committed to providing safe, caring, and confidential shelter, advocacy, and support for victims of domestic violence, rape, and sexual assault; and to reducing the incidents of abuse through prevention education. For more information go to www.dovecenter.org



Desirae (left) and Deondra Brown (right) perform for guests at the DOVE Center Annual Gala



From left: Desirae Brown, Shonie Christensen (DOVE Center Board Trustee and Gala Event Chair), Deondra Brown, Lindsey Boyer (DOVE Center Executive Director)