

POBJFK HS Graduate Starts Children's Birthday Charity

Stone Soup Parties provides free birthday parties to underprivileged and homeless children

Raina Hirschhorn, 23, a 2006 graduate of Plainview-Old Bethpage John F. Kennedy High School, opened Raina's Place, a private-party venue in Woodbury in 2010. By having her own business, she helps other people make wonderful memories. Unfortunately, there are children who are not so fortunate. Instead of worrying where to have their birthday party and whom to invite, they worry about where they will live and what they will eat. Hirschhorn created Stone Soup Parties, a 501c3 not-for-profit charity, to give these children one day of the year to make them feel special, give them hope and let them know that somebody cares.

Stone Soup Parties' mission is to provide birthday parties to underprivileged and homeless children in New York at no cost to the family. The party will afford each child a special time to celebrate their birthday when these children typically would not otherwise be able to have a birthday party. The charity is founded on the basic principle that all children should have a joyful birthday, surrounded by family and friends, and to let them know that their births meant something.

On March 31, Stone Soup Parties hosted their first party at Raina's Place for Matthew, the son of Gloria and Tim Costello; the Costello's have adopted 12 children with special needs. Matthew, obsessed with Mickey Mouse and the gang, had a fun-filled day including a visit from Mickey Mouse himself, face painting, balloon animals, cotton candy, hair braiding and more.

After the party, Hirschhorn received a touching email from Gloria saying, "Thank you will never be enough. Sarah [one of her other children] said, 'The Costellos are so lucky!' How wonderful that they feel that way. It was more than I ever expected it could be. I pray we cross paths again, you are a true inspiration. God Bless and love from all the Costellos."

The name Stone Soup Parties was inspired by the old folk story "Stone Soup" which features the important moral that by working together, with everyone con-

tributing what they can, a greater good is achieved. Balloons a la Mode was generous enough to dazzle the place in magical Mickey fashion and Yama (Liberian-Woman.net) graciously did the girls' hair braids. Franks Gourmet Pizza provided the food, and Professional Kids Entertainment performed for the children.

Stone Soup Parties will also be hosting a bingo fundraiser on Friday, April 20. This event will include bingo for great prizes, dinner, and dessert. They are requesting prize donations and gift certificates for this event from local businesses. For more information, to donate to the cause, or to nominate a deserving child, please visit www.StoneSoupParties.org.



Owner Raina Hirschhorn has opened her venue to children in need, just as she said she would when Raina's Place first opened its doors in 2010.



There was entertainment galore for all of the children.



A Mickey-shaped cake made the party extra special.

