

Sports

Hockey fundraiser for Silent Night

By ANTHONY LIFRIERI

The holiday season has a tendency of bringing out the best in people. Whether it be helping others in need, being kind or spreading joy, it is a time when people can put differences aside and come together as one.

It is in that spirit that A Day of Christmas Fundraiser will be hosted by the Smithtown Children's Foundation at the Superior Ice Rink, Saturday, December 22 at 12:30 p.m. The fundraiser will include ice hockey games, activities, celebrity appearances by Hockey Hall of Famer Pat LaFontaine and actor/comedian Gary Valentine will raise funds for the Silent Night Foundation.

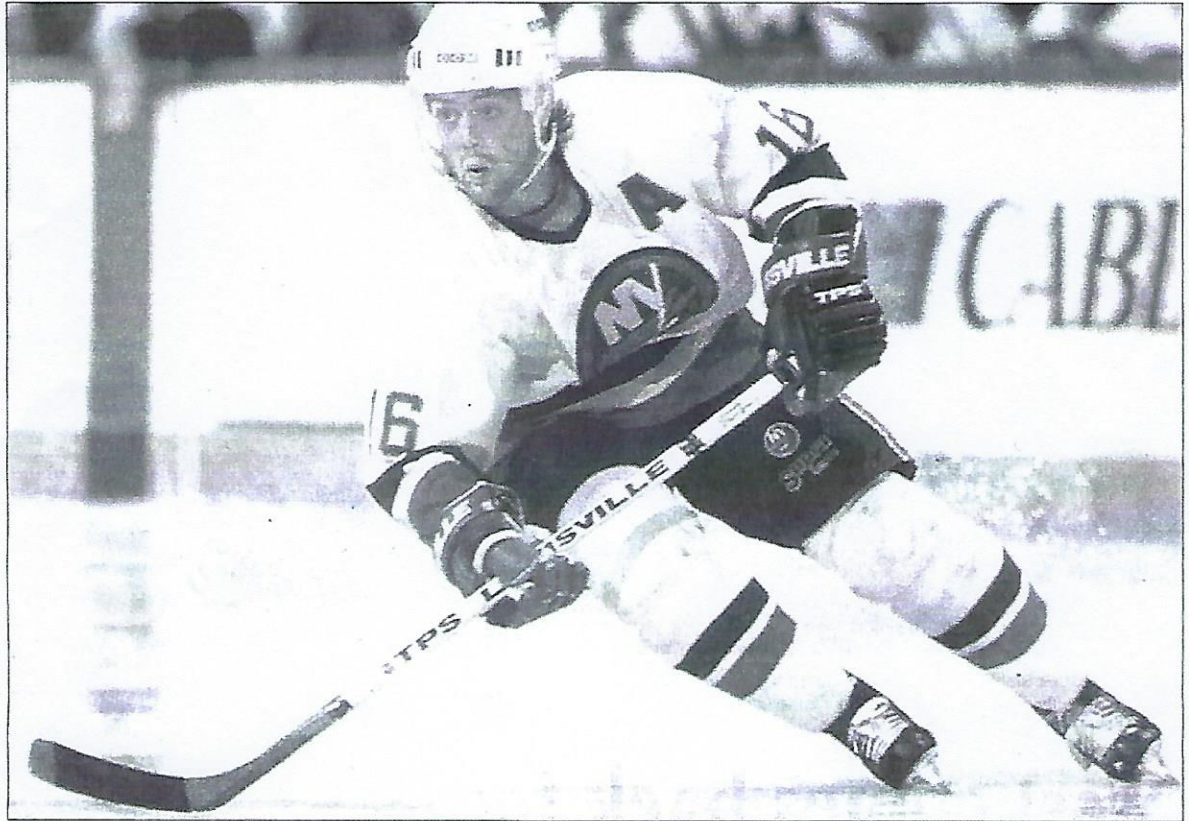
"This will be a fun event," said Christine Fitzgerald, Executive Director of the Smithtown Children's Foundation. "It's something we've been kicking around as a good segway for a holiday-themed event that will benefit both the Smithtown Children's Foundation and Silent Night."

"Every year we look for a way to bring recognition to our foundation, which allows us to help more children," Silent Night co-founder Joe Ondrush said. "We were approached by the owners of the rink, who said they wanted to do an annual event to support us. We jumped at the opportunity to work with them because they're a great family and have great facilities. It combines so many things I love into one fundraiser, so it was a no-brainer."

Superior Ice Rink has lent its full support to the fundraiser, and will donate half the concession proceeds to Silent Night. "This is something we're really excited about," Superior owner Rich McGuigan said. "Over the last couple of years we've tried little Christmas events by having Santa and crafts, but last year I was watching the St. Anthony's alumni game and thought we should combine a whole day of hockey with a holiday themed charity event."

"I spoke to [Ondrush], whose organization does great work," McGuigan said. "Our business is surrounded and catered by children, so [Silent Night's] work is something close to my heart."

The Silent Night Foundation was co-founded by the Ondrush Family and his wife, Jessica as a chapter of the Smithtown Children's Foundation with the mission



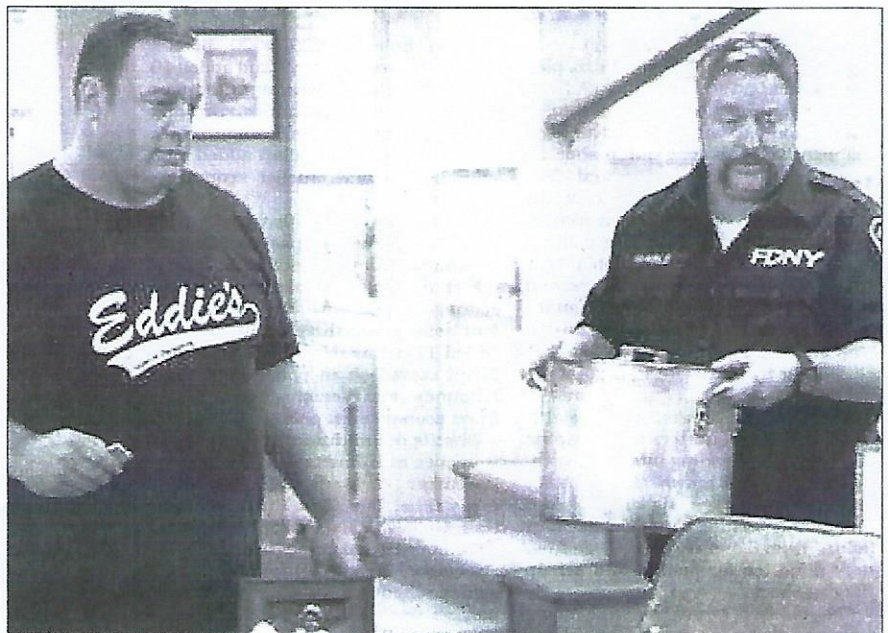
of helping underprivileged and ill children in the local community during the holiday season. Silent Night's actions include organizing holiday parties, flying in family members to be with the child, gift giving and decorating the child's home for the holidays.

"When I was a kid, Christmas was such a special morning," Ondrush said. "My siblings and I would run downstairs to piles and piles of presents. My wife and I have done everything in life to give our kids that same joy, and we eventually created Silent Night so we can help people from the community who are sick or financially struggling. We can't take away the financial struggles or whatever they're facing, but for a couple of hours they can forget about it all and have the best Christmas they possibly can."

"The beauty of the Smithtown Children's Foundation starting new chapters is it allows us to raise more money and help more people," Fitzgerald said. "Silent Night in particular, allows us to go outside of the Township of Smithtown in a small way. It also helps our mission of helping families fighting cancer."

The fundraiser at the ice rink will begin at 12:30

TAKING CENTER ICE: Hockey Hall of Famer Pat LaFontaine (above) and actor Gary Valentine (below, right) will appear at the A Day of Christmas Fundraiser, benefiting the Silent Night Foundation, at Superior Ice Rink in Kings Park, Saturday, December 22 at 12:30 p.m.



p.m. with a public session. Admission is \$15 for adults and \$10 for children 12-and-under. "We tried to make this an affordable fundraiser," Ondrush said. "Most fundraisers are hundreds of dollars per ticket, but it's also important for us to provide

a great day of family fun, holiday spirit and hockey, as well as spread word of mouth about Silent Night."

Activities at the fundraiser will include games like Chuck-A-Duck, as well as crafts and an appearance by Santa Claus. Superior will also

donate half the proceeds from the snack bar to Silent Night.

"We hope it brings more people in," Fitzgerald said. "The more people we get, the more money we can raise. The more money we raise, the more families we can help."

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BEST OF THE BEST: The Great Hollow Middle School Kickline placed first in the kick division and second in team at the Scholastic Competition at Nassau Community College, Sunday, December 9. The kickline is coached by Lisa Cangro, and the team's captains include Cassidy Brennan and Gianna Cangro.

Holiday fundraiser at Superior Ice Rink

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"We wanted to make sure there were activities for people of all ages," Ondrush said. "We're also going to have activities on the ice to get people involved."

A future stars jamboree, that features the Talent of the Long Island Royals Ice Hockey Organization will be played at 2:45 p.m. The Long Island Royals is a Tier 1 Elite 'AAA' ice hockey organization based in Kings Park. A Royals Reunion and ice hockey game will be played at 4 p.m., followed by a past stars and coaches game.

"The kids who come to the event are going to see great hockey players past and present; something they can look up to," Fitzgerald said. "It will be pretty cool."

The event will also feature celebrity appearances, headlined by LaFontaine and Valentine. "Pat LaFontaine coached in our program for a number of years, and has his own charity,

Companions in Courage," McGuigan said. "They build interactive playrooms in pediatric hospitals for longterm care, and he wanted to help. I'm proud to say the fundraiser will help both organizations."

LaFontaine is a hockey hall of famer who played 15 seasons in the NHL for the New York Islanders, Buffalo Sabers and New York Rangers. He scored 468 goals and 545 assists for a total of 1,013 points. He famously scored the game-winning goal in the fourth-overtime period of the "Easter Epic," a 3-2 Islander win over the Washington Capitals in Game Seven of the Patrick Division Semifinals. LaFontaine is also the only player in the history of the NHL to play his entire career on all three New York teams.

"I grew up on Long Island loving hockey, especially going to [Nassau] Coliseum to watch the Islanders," Fitzgerald said. "Pat was a staple of the team who was an amazing young man

even back then. He wanted to get back and be involved, even though he has a charity of his own."

Valentine is an actor, comedian and writer who has appeared on The Tonight Show and had a regular role on The King of Queens alongside his brother, Kevin James. Valentine has also appeared in movies, including Stuck on You, I Now Pronounce You Chuck and Larry and both Paul Blart movies.

"Gary is like a lot of Long Island people," Fitzgerald said. "It's nice to see guys who grew up around here who made good give back. This is a way to give back to the community that raised our children, and gave us so many great opportunities. I have to feel he feels the same way."

The fundraiser will also feature raffle baskets donated by the Long Island Royals, as well as a silent auction. Prizes for both include a door prize for a seven-day stay at Sea World

in Florida, a 50-50 raffle and a flat-screen television. Raffles will be sold at the event for \$20 per sheet of tickets.

For more information on the event, visit smithtownchildrensfoundation.com. Ondrush is excited about the day, and hopes it will be a success. "I hope everyone who comes has an absolutely great time," he said. "They should be in for some great hockey, win some prizes and understand there are people in the community who need help, but it doesn't take a lot to give it. If they do that, they will understand what Silent Night is, and hopefully we'll be able to count on them in the future to help the foundation."

McGuigan also hopes the event will be a success. "I hope people leave it looking forward to coming back next year," he said. "I'm also hoping we raise awareness for two really great charities and the outstanding work they do."