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**A Night of Celebration: Festival of Children® Launches Its 24th Year  
at South Coast Plaza**

COSTA MESA, CA – September 3, 2025 – The spirit of community, compassion, and celebration filled South Coast Plaza on September 3, a Festival of Children Foundation welcomed more than 385 guests to its Opening Night Party, officially kicking off the 24th annual Festival of Children®.

The evening was a vibrant mix of music, food, and camaraderie — but most of all, it was about honoring the heart of the Festival: the nonprofits who dedicate themselves to serving children and families. Fifty-three charities were represented, creating a powerful sense of unity and purpose.

Founder & Executive Director Sandy Segerstrom Daniels unveiled this year’s Festival theme, *“Love is a Gift: There’s No Measuring Its Worth.”* The message, she explained, is a tribute to the immeasurable impact nonprofits have on young lives. *“There’s no ruler long enough to measure the healing, hope, and resilience you offer,”* she told the crowd.

The night was filled with memorable moments:

- **Spotlight on Giving Back:** The new *Give it Forward* campaign was introduced, inviting communities nationwide to support youth-serving nonprofits as a way to participate in National Child Awareness Month.
- **The Founder’s Award:** Longtime community supporters Frank and Beverly Buchholz were honored with the Founder’s Award for their enduring commitment to giving back and strengthening the communities they call home.
- **A Hero in the Making:** Nine-year-old Ace Christopherson-Bilbruck received this year’s KARA Award for founding the *Ace of Hearts Project*, an all-youth nonprofit spreading joy and kindness to seniors, foster children, and families in crisis. Ace’s heartfelt mission reminded everyone that kids don’t have to wait their turn to change the world.
- **Community Champions:** Longstanding partners such as CHOC Foundation (now part of Rady Children’s Health), Hyundai Hope on Wheels, Whittier Trust, Alliant Insurance Services, CHUBB, Mitsubishi Electric, and Mesa Water were celebrated, along with media sponsor LAist and new supporter Cormany Chung Insurance.

Guests also enjoyed sweet treats donated by Dilly's Ice Cream, courtesy of young entrepreneur Dilyn Gonzales, whose story of giving back reflected the evening's theme of generosity.

Local leaders joined in the festivities, including Orange County Supervisors Katrina Foley and Vicente Sarmiento, Costa Mesa Mayor John Stephens, and representatives from cities across the region.

As guests mingled, posed for photos, and placed "Hands of Hope" on the Hyundai Hope on Wheels vehicle to show their support for childhood cancer research, the sense of togetherness was undeniable.

The Opening Night Party was just the beginning. The Festival continues every weekend throughout September at South Coast Plaza, offering free family-friendly performances, interactive exhibits, and opportunities to connect with nonprofits doing extraordinary work.

"This Festival is for you, because of you, and inspired by you," Segerstrom Daniels told the audience in her closing remarks. "Let's carry this joyful energy into September and beyond — knowing that love truly is the greatest gift."

For the full schedule of Festival events, visit [www.festivalofchildren.org](http://www.festivalofchildren.org).

### **About Festival of Children Foundation**

Festival of Children Foundation is a nonprofit organization that works year-round to improve the lives of children by strengthening the charities that serve them. Founded by Sandy Segerstrom Daniels in 2003, the Foundation provides support and resources to children's charities, helping them achieve their mission to better the lives of children.