

REPORT ON ZAMARR INSTITUTE 2010 ANNUAL FUNDRAISING DINNERS IN LAGOS & ABUJA

As part of our activities to create awareness about Autism, and to further support children/families living with autism and other related developmental disabilities, the Zamarr Institute organized fundraising dinners in Lagos and Abuja on 8th & 9th July 2010 respectively. The theme of both dinners was '*the importance of early intervention for the success of children with autism and other related developmental disabilities*'.

The dinner in **Lagos** held at Terra Kulture, Victoria Island. The guests were very prompt and by 6.30pm, the event was well underway. There was huge media presence in Lagos particularly the print media. The event was anchored by Mandy – the comedienne. The Guest performer- Tony DeBlois - thrilled the guests with beautiful renditions of his music accompanied by the renowned songstress - Yinka Davies. The high point of his performance was 'Igwe' and 'Taxi driver' which he had less than a week to learn. Among the distinguished guests were Prof. Pat Utomi of Pan African University, renowned actress -Joke Silva as well as representatives of the Secretary to the Lagos State Government & the Minister of Information and Communication. A short documentary on the Zamarr Institute was played to give guests an insight to what a regular day at the centre is like. This was followed by a fashion show by EVE 2000 after which one of the lovely outfits was put up for auction. The auction was conducted by Mr Tony Uranta and the dress sold to the highest bidder. All through the night, Mandy cracked up the guests with hilarious jokes while ushers went around receiving donations and pledges. A parent gave a touching account of her experience with autism and the progress her daughter had made over the years. She enjoined other parents to believe in their wards and work with teachers or therapists to bring out the best in them. Amidst the music and laughs, guests were made to reflect on the challenges of living and working with children with special needs. The night wended down with more heart-warming performances by Tony DeBlois. Photographs of the event were published on ThisDay style.

At the congress hall in Transcorp Hilton, **Abuja**, guests started to arrive from 7pm. The night began with the National Anthem followed by the welcome address and goodwill messages from the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development and the Ministry of Information and Communication. Again there was significant media presence at the dinner particularly the electronic media. The Honourable Minister of Health in his speech commended the efforts of Zamarr and gave assurance of the support of his ministry to its focal areas. Guests were familiarised with Zamarr's day to day activities through a short documentary. Items on the programme of events were punctuated with performances by Tony DeBlois accompanied by Agatha from Orpheus music. The first high point of the evening was a fashion parade by the Zamarr children. The kids were brought on the stage by their therapists and were such delights in their various traditional attires. As guests settled down to a sumptuous dinner, an artwork donated by Mohammed was auctioned at the event and sold to the highest bidder. Janice, the mother of Tony DeBlois shared her experiences as parent of a blind and autistic child. She gave an amazing account of working through her son's challenges, nurturing his musical skills and eventually, her battle with cancer. Her inspiring story challenged all present especially parents of Zamarr children. Tony once again wowed guests with his renditions of 'Igwe' and 'Taxi driver'. Mrs Katagum in her speech expressed gratitude to friends and

associates of Zamarr. She talked about Zamarr in general, sharing the organisation's future plans and appealed to everyone to work towards making the vision a reality. The rest of the evening went by with lovely renditions from Tony. Clips of the event were aired on Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) and African Independent Television (AIT) the day after the event.

Below are some of the pictures from the dinner in Abuja:



