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## **Despite COVID-19 Pandemic, CHRIS 180 finds success in virtual CHRISal Ball**

**ATLANTA** (September 24, 2020) In a season of cancelled events and virtual fundraisers, Atlanta nonprofit CHRIS 180 is celebrating the success of its 20<sup>th</sup> annual CHRISal Ball event held August 19. Like others across the city, the organization was forced to shift the event to a virtual experience for guests after the COVID-19 pandemic began. However, with inventive practices and a focus on storytelling and the user experience, the organization managed to exceed its pandemic goal, raising \$415,000 for CHRIS 180's programs and community outreach efforts.

Led by co-chairs and CHRIS 180 board members Julia Houston and Terrin McKay, much of the success of the event can be attributed to early fundraising efforts, with organizers securing top sponsors, Delta Air Lines and The Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation months before the pandemic. Once the team behind The CHRISal Ball realized it would have to be 100% virtual, they made several additions and changes looking for ways to engage corporate and individual donors. CHRIS 180 added a patron level sponsorship at \$1,000 that included two curated meals by event sponsor and longtime friend of the organization, Tony Conway, CEO of Legendary Events. Conway, also threw in two raffle items, dinner for six prepared by his team. "We knew that without people in a room for a live auction, we needed to encourage people in CHRIS 180's network to give in a different way. The patron sponsorship allowed us to connect with friends of the organization, give them a unique food experience to enjoy during the live event and support a dear friend to our organization," said Kevin Clift, Chief Development Officer at CHRIS 180. Additionally, corporate and individual sponsors of the event were offered the meals, delivered right to their front doors by the organization.

One highlight of the annual August event is always testimonials from clients who CHRIS 180 has supported in the past year. During the live version of The CHRISal Ball, participants often share their journey from trauma to triumph and the role the organization has played in their healing with trauma-informed counseling services and other support. This year, CHRIS 180 used video testimonials to share stories of two clients, young men who have overcome homelessness, time in the foster care system and broken family relationships to change the direction of their lives. In addition, the organization also featured its COVID-19 relief efforts over the past six months across Atlanta and partnerships to build stronger, more resilient communities in Atlanta's Neighborhood Planning Unit V (NPU-V) area.

To open and close the night, The CHRISal Ball committee enlisted the help of local R&B band, Gritz & Jelly Butter to perform a 30-minute opening set streamed live on YouTube and Facebook along with a bonus song at the end to give the event a true gala feel. One look at the comments from CHRIS 180's live feed of the event showered the hometown band with praise as people danced and sang in the privacy, and safety of their own homes.

While the pandemic forced CHRIS 180 to take a unique spin on its largest fundraiser, their risks paid off, with the organization raising the second highest amount of any CHRISal Ball event in history, second only to the record-breaking success of the 2019 fundraiser. And in true event fashion, planning has already kicked off for the 2021 event, with hopes for an in-person event, with backup plans just in case.

To learn more about CHRIS 180 or to support its 2020 sponsors, visit [CHRISalBall.org](http://CHRISalBall.org).