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Lawyer-musicians plan concert benefit for heart research

BY SARAH MANSUR
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Less than a week after Christina S. Ballester's son Alexander was born, he underwent surgery to repair a congenital heart defect.

Ballester's experience with Alexander, now 3 years old and healthy, has motivated her to organize a concert on April 14 in Wilmette benefiting the Children's Health Foundation, Illinois chapter.

"I was very fortunate that they found it early before he was born," said Ballester, a senior care claims counsel with Medpro Group, a health-care liability insurance company. "It's really an important cause that I don't think gets enough awareness."

The show begins at 7 p.m. at the Rockhouse Cafe, 1150 Central Ave. All proceeds will go to the children's foundation.

Congenital heart defects are the most common birth defect affecting roughly 40,000 babies born in the U.S. each year, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Congenital heart defects alter the structure of a baby's heart and how blood flows to the rest of the body, according to the CDC. In some cases, congenital heart defects result in a small hole in the heart. More severe forms of the condition lead to missing or poorly formed parts of the heart.

Ballester said the idea for the benefit concert formed

after she and Thomas R. Mulroy III teamed up to create a band, Ex Cathedra, late last year.

"I told him that I felt like what we were doing was so awesome and that ... if we could do it to raise money for an important cause it would make it that much more fruitful — it would feel so much more fulfilling," she said.

Mulroy is a partner at Salvi, Schostok & Pritchard P.C., joining the plaintiff firm in January after 19 years at Hinshaw & Culbertson LLP.

"We thought the most fun way we could try to give back would be to put on a show and donate all the proceeds to that organization," he said.

She said the purpose of the benefit concert is more than just fundraising. The other reason is "to raise awareness to people of that fact that this can happen, but it's not a death sentence, and that there are wonderful people out there to help families through it."

Ballester said Alexander will attend part of the event.

"I think it's good to have a face assigned to the cause," she said. Though doctors continue to monitor Alexander, she said he has not faced any residual problems.

"Being a lawyer and being as prepared as you are to walk in court and argue a motion could never ever prepare you as a mother to walk into the hospital to deliver a child that you know is going to have to under-



Attorneys Thomas R. Mulroy III and Christina S. Ballester are collectively the band Ex Cathedra. They organized a concert benefit on April 14 to raise funds for congenital heart defect research. Ballester's son, now a healthy 3-year-old, was born with a heart condition. Photo provided by Salvi, Schostok & Pritchard PC.

CONCERT DETAILS

- Saturday, April 14, 7 p.m., The Rockhouse Cafe, 1150 Central Ave., Wilmette,
- \$10 suggested donation for adults; children under 12 free. All proceeds will benefit the Children's Heart Foundation, Illinois chapter.
- Donate at weblink.donorperfect.com/ExCathedra or by mail to CHF Illinois Chapter, P.O. Box 2844, Glenview, IL 60026, with memo "ex Cathedra"

go that," Ballester said, her voice cracking with emotion.

"I was blessed to have him do so well," she said, adding that she is grateful to the hospital staff and surgeons who

have been supportive.

"This is selfishly my way of trying to say 'thank you' for the blessings and how well he is doing."

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