

# **THANKS, SAVANNAH, FOR SUPPORTING THE SUPPORTERS!**

*By Jill Cheeks*

*Mediation Center Executive Director*

At the Mediation Center, we're well-versed in supporting others. We support children in the community through our three youth programs and our partnership with the Chatham County Juvenile Court System. We support families who are encountering difficulties through the Family Law Resource Center. We support people from all walks of life who are trying to resolve their conflicts as easily and painlessly as possible through mediation (rather than taking the issue to court). We support troubled individuals who have committed minor infractions but are eager to amend their ways and make up for the issues they've caused.

We have worked tirelessly to serve this community for over 30 years, and we wouldn't have it any other way. We're proud of our service and thrilled so many area residents have taken advantage of our programs over the years. What we do matters and we're so eager to continue providing these valuable programs.

However, for one evening in January, we enjoyed a few hours of red carpet treatment. During our inaugural Velvet Gala on Jan. 18, the community turned out in droves to support the Mediation Center, and it was positively moving. All proceeds from the gala, which was held at the marvelous Cohen's Retreat, will benefit our youth programs. About 150 guests attended, making clear their support for the Mediation Center and the children we are committed to serving in our community.

This "role reversal" was impressive on so many levels. Not only were ticket sales and attendance strong, area businesses and community leaders also offered their support through generous sponsorship, raffle prize donations, discounted products and services, volunteerism, and various other in-kind offerings.

The Velvet Gala truly was a prime example of the community coming together to support a worthy charitable effort. We're flattered that so many people were there for us when we needed it. Perhaps there is some truth to that old adage, "You get out of it what you put into it." In any case, we're very grateful to the folks who helped ensure the astounding success of our event. Now that the bar has been set high, we can't wait to start planning next year's Velvet Gala – we intend to outdo ourselves!