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### Drew Barrymore Speaks At New York Society For The Prevention Of Cruelty To Children's Spring Luncheon



Lee Fryd

[lsfryd@aol.com](mailto:lsfryd@aol.com)



Drew Barrymore and Dr. Mary Pulido. (Photo: Sylvain Gaboury/PMC)

Drew Barrymore stood at the podium in the Pierre at the Fifth Annual Spring Luncheon for the New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NYSPPCC). She was about to read the chapter from her bestselling book, "Wildflower," that dealt with her efforts to help children in Africa. Revisiting that story might cause her to break down on the podium, but "laughter and crying are twins," she explained. "You men are still struggling with that... It's that craziness that actually evolves into compassion. That's what's



so beautiful about women. There are gorgeous things about men, too. But I happen to understand women, being one myself. We wear our hearts on our sleeves." True to her words, as Barrymore showed the room how an Academy Award winner delivers a reading, there were tears glistening in the eyes around the room as well.

The New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children is the first child protection agency in the world, founded in 1879, using the guidelines for the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. Executive Director Mary L Pulido, Ph.D. explained their mission in three bullet points: "First, we take the most challenging cases that other agencies turn away because they are so complex. Second, we have experts and the children heal. Third, because the children heal and we're doing such amazing things, everyone wants to know how do we do it, so we are teaching our training throughout the world."



Elizabeth Mayhew. (Photo: Sylvain Gaboury/PMC)

The organization's services don't stop there. "But our work is not done," she explained. "Thousands of children in the United States are still dying at the hands of those who are supposed to protect them." Most are infants and toddlers, too young to be in the public school system. "We also realize that the parents of these children are struggling themselves," Pulido added. "We're dealing with mental illness, substance abuse, domestic, crime ridden neighborhoods."

"One agency acting alone can't possibly take care of all these children," Pulido emphasized. It takes a village. "If you see something that's not right with a child, please do something. We must be their champions."

Longtime children's champion, Dr. Penny Grant, a Board Certified Child Abuse Pediatrician, was once the first line of defense for these kids, identifying injuries caused by abuse. "I saw when mothers didn't get help, their children became victims," Dr. Grant told us. "Child abuse is intergenerational. More often than not, if parents weren't healed, their children weren't whole." How many more stories do we have to read about babysitting boyfriends beating babies to death to figure that out?

Now retired from practice, Dr. Grant, one of three Vice Chairs for the luncheon, devotes her energy to NYSPCC, to help heal the physical and psychological wounds to society's most vulnerable she saw.



Kathleen Giordano, Lee Fryd, and Dr. Penny Grant. (Photo: Sylvain Gaboury/PMC)

"Through these luncheons, the NYCPS has raised awareness of the problem," she said. "Our programs — training children how to identify unsafe touches and say no — give the kids the skills to protect themselves and the authorities to whom to turn."

The luncheon co-chairs were The Society's Board of Directors Maarit Glocer, Valesca Guerrand-Hermès, Elizabeth Mayhew, and Joan Granlund, as well as supporters Tania Higgins and Connie Newberry. Vice-chairs included Peggy Anderson, Russ Coniglio and Penny Grant, MD. This year's funds will go to the

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Trauma Recovery Program, which will be used for training in New York City schools. Last year's proceeds resulted in new programs for two Bronx public schools.

That night, at the request of The NYSPCC, The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey and The Durst Organization lit the One World Trade Center spire in blue to commemorate National Child Abuse Prevention Month.

For more information, visit [www.nyspcc.org](http://www.nyspcc.org).