

The North Shore Weekend



EMPOWERING SURVIVORS

Three North Shore mothers join forces as co-chairs of the 5th Annual WINGS North Shore Ladies Luncheon, a May 16 fundraiser that spotlights inspiring stories of resilience and transformation.

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BY BRONTE STARLING

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Yashi James once walked the runways in Mumbai, Paris, and Milan as a sought-after international model, representing such iconic brands as Versace, Armani, and Gianvito Rossi.

A native of northern India, her life was one that most only dream of. But then, after moving to the United States, she found herself in a situation that far too many can relate to—navigating the unimaginable challenges of an abusive marriage and all with a child on the way.

“One of the biggest misconceptions about domestic violence is that it only happens in certain types of communities or families. The reality is that domestic violence does not discriminate—it affects people across all backgrounds, income levels, and neighborhoods,” explains Shelby Hasten of Wilmette, one of three co-chairs of this year’s WINGS North Shore Ladies Luncheon. “It’s often far more common, and far more hidden, than many people realize.”

Another misconception, adds fellow cochair and Wilmette resident Claire Parker, is that leaving is simple.

‘In reality, it takes extraordinary courage to step away from an unsafe situation, especially when children, finances, housing, and safety are all factors,’ she says. “That’s why organizations like WINGS are so critical. They provide not just a safe place to go in a moment of crisis, but also the resources, guidance, and support survivors need to rebuild their lives and move forward with stability and dignity.’

James did just that, leaving her abuser while still pregnant to rebuild her life from the ground up. Today, as a successful underwriter, founder of Model Bridge USA, and proud mother, she uses her voice and platform to uplift and empower survivors. On Friday, May 16, she will join other survivors in sharing their stories at the 5th Annual WINGS North Shore Ladies Luncheon at Westmoreland Country Club, located at 2601 Old Glenview Road in Wilmette.

This year’s luncheon fundraiser, which takes place from 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. the weekend after Mother’s Day, is a reminder of the power of mothers—to aid, to protect, to survive, and to thrive despite adversity. For Hasten, Parker, and their third co-chair Margaret Chaffee of Winnetka, being able to help other mothers is what inspired them to help support WINGS, the largest nonprofit organization dedicated to providing housing, integrated services, education, and advocacy for survivors of domestic violence in Illinois. “As a mother, this cause really speaks to me on a personal level,” says Chaffee. “Becoming involved with WINGS was very much rooted in being a parent. When you have children, your perspective shifts in such a profound way—their safety, their wellbeing, and the environment they grow up in becomes everything. I think every parent can relate to that instinct—the feeling that you would do absolutely anything to protect your children—and it makes the work that WINGS does for families so meaningful.”

The leadership of this year’s luncheon by three North Shore mothers reflects the reality of the families the organization serves as the majority of WINGS clients are mothers with young children. Last year alone, 40 percent of all victims served by WINGS were children.

“Domestic violence impacts entire families,” says Parker. “As mothers, this mission hits especially close to home. We want every woman to know that safety, stability, and a new beginning are possible—for herself and for her children.”

The May 16 event will bring together nearly 300 North Shore philanthropists, business leaders, and advocates to raise critical funds and awareness for WINGS’ life-saving programs. Attendees will hear stories of resilience and transformation, highlighting the organization’s extraordinary impact—95 percent of women who complete the WINGS program do not return to their abuser.

“That statistic represents thousands of lives changed,” says WINGS CEO Rebecca Darr. “It means children growing up in safe homes, women reclaiming their independence, and families breaking the cycle of violence for generations to come.”

Since its founding, WINGS has helped more than 20,000

individuals build violencefree lives, including women right here on the North Shore. The WINGS North Shore Ladies Luncheon plays a vital role in sustaining this work by funding emergency shelter, transitional housing, counseling, legal advocacy, and economic empowerment programs.

“WINGS is such a powerful organization because it goes far beyond providing immediate safety,” says Hasten. “While a safe haven is critical, WINGS also equips survivors with the services, resources, and support they need to rebuild their lives—empowering them to move forward with stability, independence, and the opportunity to truly thrive long term.”

She and her co-chairs say the luncheon is more than a fundraiser. It is a celebration of courage, community, and the unwavering belief that every mother deserves the chance to raise her children in safety and peace.

“What has also been especially inspiring to see throughout this process is how our community has shown up in such a meaningful way,” adds Parker. “From people attending the event to businesses and individuals donating incredible raffle items, the generosity has been amazing. It’s a reminder that when a cause is this important, people truly want to be part of supporting it, and together we can help provide the resources that allow WINGS to continue changing lives.”

For tickets or more information about the 5th Annual WINGS North Shore Ladies Luncheon, visit wingsprogram.com/upcomingevent/wings-5th-annual-north-shore-ladiesluncheon/



Margaret Chafee



Shelby Hasten



Claire Parker

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