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Little Lion Cafe, Solare participating at Harvest for Hope fundraiser for Emilio Nares Foundation

by [LUCIA VITI](#)

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Harvest for Hope will gather San Diego's finest chefs and wineries to honor the Emilio Nares Foundation at San Diego Central Library on Sunday, Oct. 1. Founders Richard and Diane Nares established the Emilio Nares Foundation to support low-income, underprivileged families whose children are battling cancer. Ride With Emilio, which commemorates the life

of their son Emilio, provides patients and caregivers free transportation to hospitals and clinics for surgery and on-going clinical therapy.

Celebrating fine cuisine, exotic wines, live music, a silent and live auction, the annual event, now in its 14th year, will also feature a cocktail bar hosted by the Snake Oil Cocktail Co. and craft beers donated by Ballast Point Brewing Co., and the Stone Brewery Co.

“Harvest for Hope is critical to our continued success to serve underprivileged families fighting childhood cancer,” said ENF co-founder Richard Nares, “whether it’s driving them to their treatment appointments or providing them emotional support.”

“Harvest for Hope is the perfect way to enjoy a beautiful, fun afternoon filled with incredible food, fine wine and live music,” added ENF co-founder Diane Nares. “Harvest for Hope helps to keep Emilio’s legacy and our mission alive.”

Richard and Diane Nares transformed a devastating loss into a living legacy. Their son Emilio was diagnosed with Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia (ALL) at age 3. Dwelling in a world that rotated fear with promise and desperation with hope, Emilio forged through three years of intensive chemotherapy, a bone marrow transplant and a relapse.

Emilio lost his battle with cancer prior to his 6th birthday. Surrounded by family and friends throughout the ordeal, Richard and Diane realized that despite this horrific tragedy, they were fortunate. Many families enduring the same nightmare lacked familial and financial support.

According to Diane, tales of families caring for cancer-ridden children with little or no assistance were “endless.” Single moms who couldn’t spend the night in the hospital because they lacked childcare for their children at home; car-less parents spending four hours on a bus heading to Rady Children’s Hospital with a child suffering with a brain tumor; and single dads caring for their children alone because their mothers simply couldn’t handle the diagnosis of cancerous tumors, were among the multitude of the norm.

After grieving the death of Emilio, the couple “tip-toed” back into Rady Children’s Hospital to advise nurses and social workers that they were available

help other families. Requests for transport to hospitals and clinics for treatment quickly overwhelmed Richard's six-person capacity car. The couple applied and received a 501(c)3, giving birth to ENF and Ride with Emilio, a nonprofit pediatric cancer patient transportation organization. Since 2003, the flagship program ensures that every child receives transportation to life-saving cancer treatments in three southern California counties.

"Thinking that we'd never lose Emilio, we always knew that when the worst was over, we – all three of us – would help less fortunate families," said Diane. "We just didn't know how. And Ride With Emilio made perfect sense. Whether it's a daily or annual appointment, our mission ensures that no child misses a cancer treatment due to lack of transportation."

Year-round fundraising for ENF led to Harvest for Hope. "Carving out" an idea fueled by the kindness of others, Diane combined her wine industry experience with restaurant owners who cooked meals for her and Richard during Emilio's illness. Today, the "casually elegant, walk-around festive gala" hosts almost 20 participating eateries including Point Loma's Legal Restaurants, Little Lion Cafe and Solare.

Solare owner and chef Randy Smerick has worked Harvest for Hope for five years, impressed by the foundation's work of filling the hole of providing transportation for children to receive their cancer care.

"We've all been exposed to the difficult journey of cancer," said Smerick. "Childhood cancer is tough for everyone. So many brave and wonderful people have stepped up to help the forgotten, including Richard and Diane. Businesses contribute time, energy and products to be part of what Diane and Richard have created. We supply food and our team to help make Harvest for Hope a success for everyone."

Smerick noted the "amazing" quality of "high-energy and passionate" work performed by ENF. "Anyone can help with transportation, but it's quite another thing to have wonderful, clean vehicles that are always on time," he said. "A tremendous amount of work is needed to run ENF. But a community of people donate to ensure the continued success of this foundation."

"Randy's team at Solare is the perfect example of the amazing cooks and services who work as partners with ENF," said Diane. "Along with Little Lion Cafe Coulon sister owners and Legal Restaurants, as well as our wine and eatery partners, Harvest for Hope is a truly fabulous evening for all."

In partnership with Rady Children's Hospital, Harvest for Hope and Ride With Emilio will highlight ENF recipients the likes of 9-year old Arturo who was diagnosed with ALL at age seven. Arturo received a Bone Marrow Transplant in 2015. In 2016, he traveled 1,775 miles for treatments at Rady Children's Hospital. And 6-year old Fabew, diagnosed with Idiopathic Thrombocytopenic Purpura in 2015 at age 4, will also be noted. Fabew's clocked almost 3,000 miles between El Cajon and Rady Children's Hospital for treatment. Also included will be 8-year old Daniella and 7-year-old Erika, both diagnosed with ALL. Since Erika's 2015 diagnoses, she's traveled 5,313 miles with Ride With Emilio.

"Emilio's spirit can be felt in the hundreds of young patients ENF helps," concluded Diane. "Whether it's laughter in the van, a comforting hand held

during hard times at the hospital and the smiling eyes of our families, he looks after us all.”

For more information, visit enfhope.org.

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