

THE MORNING JOURNAL

News

A living angel: Nakon receives award for his work with breast cancer foundation

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LORAIN — Matthew Nakon, an Avon attorney, was named the 2010 Living Angel last night for his work with the Karen P. Nakon Breast Cancer Foundation in a moving ceremony at the 24th annual Life Savers Ball.

“Our angel is a quiet man who speaks through bold actions,” said Dr. Alexander Zolli, chairman of the Life Savers Ball, hosted at DeLuca’s Place in the Park. “He stands as a beacon of hope, aiding many during their difficult journey.”

Nakon’s foundation, begun in 2003 to honor the memory of his wife, Karen, who died that year after a five-year battle with breast cancer, has given about \$360,000 to about

200 families across Ohio in the last seven years, he said.

"We can't help every family, but those we help, we want it to be meaningful," Nakon said. His foundation raises money from individuals and other foundations, including the Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure, to distribute to families whose finances have suffered from the high cost of cancer treatment.

In accepting his award, Nakon recalled helping a North Ridgeville family with five children, whose mother and father were both police officers.

"People can be dropped from their insurance coverage, and have to decide whether to pay their mortgages or buy food," said Nakon, 46. Nakon's foundation paid the North Ridgeville family's mortgage for five months while they got back on their feet, he said.

Karen Nakon was seven months pregnant with the couple's third child when she was diagnosed with breast cancer, he said.

"You think you're living the good life, and then it's all thrown upside-down," said Nakon, who is a law partner at Wickens, Herzer, Panza, Cook & Batista, in Avon. "But we took it and ran with it."

Karen Nakon started chemotherapy a few days after the birth of their daughter Madison. In the next five years she had eight surgeries and more than 300 chemotherapy sessions, Zolli said, before her death on her 38th birthday.

"Cancer claimed the love of his life, but it did not conquer his spirit," Zolli said about Nakon. "He became the inspiration and fire behind the foundation that bears his wife's name ... This labor of love stands unparalleled in the crusade against this dreaded disease."

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brih wrote on Mar 7, 2010 9:50 AM:

"What a wonderful tribute. What a man of great courage and goodwill. Very heartwarming. God's blessings on Mr. Nakon and his family. "

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chrisyes wrote on Mar 7, 2010 12:54 PM:

"Such a great story..... it is wonderful to see people giving back to society in spite of the most challenging time in their own lives. Carry on Mr. Nakon...you are an inspiration to many. "

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