FUNDRAISER SPEECH

FOR

PATRICIA KUKES

If you can’t see something, does it really exist? If a person is sick and needs help, wouldn’t we be able to see the manifestation of symptoms? A fever? A rash? Something to tell us something is really fundamentally wrong? If a person is blushing or sweating, or unable to look you in the eye, is it in everyone’s best interest to downplay what that person is feeling? If a condition doesn’t really manifest in overt physical symptoms, is it real? Hello everyone, and on behalf of the Board of Directors and volunteers of AKF, thank you so much for being here tonight. Your presence and interest in the Andrew Kukes Foundation for Social Anxiety means more than you’ll ever know. We want to acknowledge you for taking the time and acting on the hunch that we might have something vital and interesting to share.

This atmosphere is alive with buzz. The adrenalin is pumping-at least **MINE** is, and as I speak to all of you, the butterflies in my stomach are fluttering, we’re all primed and eager to meet each other, mingle and learn about this worthy cause, but consider that a person with social anxiety disorder would probably not even be able to join us in this room to have the opportunity to just be with us and have the chance to overcome overwhelming and compulsive fears of large, or even intimate gatherings. It’s difficult for most of us to fathom what it is like to be so frozen by the terror of social interaction that life is halted-literally. As children we may be shy, as teenagers we may be embarrassed easily, and as adults, we just may be too self conscious to get out of our own way. Friends and family may mean well by offering to minimize the dread we may feel, and some may “Poo Poo” this sort of anxiety, but it’s real, it’s destructive, and it damages people, families and communities.

Tonight we’re here to honor our son Andrew’s legacy, as we bring light to this condition. Social anxiety is an insidious enemy. Its manifestation can be subtle and elusive and its damage can be devastating. Believe me, I know. We have formed the AKFSA with the mission to educate EVERYONE-from social anxiety sufferers and their families and friends, to medical professionals, educators, communities-in order to inform and empower those who suffer and the people who love and care about them. Because it is a condition with subtle outward symptoms present in an individual to varying degrees, and because those who suffer from social anxiety tend to withdraw themselves from any sort of attention, social anxiety can easily go undetected. With education, outreach, vigilance and compassion, the Andrew Kukes Foundation for Social Anxiety intends to provide a supportive forum to fight the demons and heal the spirits of those haunted by this condition.

We want to thank all of you for your interest and generosity. We know that in these challenging times, it may feel as though we are all stretched beyond our limits, but we believe in the resilience and sustainability of the human soul and its resources. Andrew continues to inspire all of us, and it is our intention that through support from people like you, Andrew’s legacy will shine a light and heal the souls of many people now and into the future.