

Shenanigans April 26, 2007

## ThanksUSA!

USA Today ranked "ThanksUSA" as one of the top 25 charities in the country.

Even more, it was started by two girls -- Kelsi and Rachel Okun, ages 9 and 11, respectively -- who happen to be the good-natured daughters of NBC D.C. lobbyist Bob Okun.

Tuesday morning, a phalanx of bipartisan types filed into the Willard for a breakfast celebrating the charity/scholarship program's first anniversary. GOPers Frank Fahrenkopf, Ed Gillespie and Ken Duberstein and Demos Tony Podesta, Joel Johnson and Harry McPherson, and restaurant types Geoff Tracy of Chef Geoff's, Les Halles' Philippe Lajaunie, Ashok Bajaj, owner of 701, Bombay Club, Rasika and Ardeo/Bardeo, and Jenifer Abi-Najm from our 'hood's prime-time joint, Lebanese Taverna, all sponsored the event.

Also, the two most powerful 9- and 11-year-olds in town announced that they were "donating \$1,000 of their chore money" to create a scholarship for teachers. Jeweler Jorge Adeler took a cue from them and announced he would throw in 10 grand for military spouses or relations wanting to study geology or gemology.

But as they say, an event just isn't an event without D.C.'s most popular guy, Bob Schieffer. The "Face the Nation" anchor promoted the importance of ThanksUSA at the podium, along with Lea Ann Edwards (wife of Texas Dem Rep. Chet Edwards).

"The girls really believe that the more you give, the more you get. The personal thanks they received from the military families have made it all worthwhile for them," Daddy Okun proudly boasted to us yesterday.

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