

Local jazz singer pays tribute to Ella

Jazz vocalist Vickie Smith, a Bloomfield resident, presented a special tribute show on July 17 as part of the "Moonlight Nights" in Montclair Concert Series. The show, "Ella! The Song is You" is a dedication to the late Ella Fitzgerald, and shows a rare look at her early recording years, and the strong impact the jazz legend had on Smith.

Paul Ellis, director of the Montclair Office of Art and Cultural Development which sponsored the event, said that this show drew a record number of concertgoers, thanks to Smith and her idea of working with the Diabetes Research Institute Foundation on the event.

This was the first time the Montclair OACD had

worked with another organization during its Moonlight Nights in Montclair series. Donations were collected from the audience by volunteers from DRIF, and will be used to help find a cure for juvenile diabetes.

"Ella died from complications of diabetes," Smith said. "Children were very dear to her heart, and she was very concerned for their welfare, having lived both in orphanages and on the street as a youngster, before her career took off.

"The connection I made to the Diabetes Research Institute Foundation was a natural one.

"Ella never wanted to sing about her own troubles. All she wanted was to make you, the audience, happy.

"And we're not only paying tribute to one of the greatest jazz legends of all time, but we're really making a difference in people's lives, and that's what I feel Ella would want," Smith told audience members.

Tom Karlya, DRIF's senior development director, spoke of the importance of the Montclair donations and about the work being done by the foundation.

"Because of our hard work, and your generous donations, we are on our way. As I stand here now, there are 18 people in clinical trials who have had Type I Diabetes reversed, and are no longer insulin-dependent," Karlya said.

A plaque was presented to Smith for her work with them in presenting this show. The event not only raised well-directed dollars for DRIF, it also connected them to New Jersey diabetes groups and future opportunities to provide diabetes education and research funding.

To find out more information about Smith's upcoming performances in the area, visit her Web site at www.VickieSmith.com. For more information about the DRIF, visit www.drinet.org

