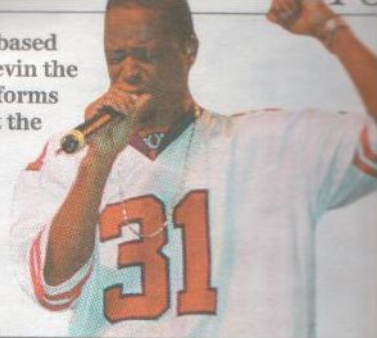


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Houston-based rapper Devin the Dude performs tonight at the Reverb.



NOTEWORTHY

DRESSING UP FOR A CAUSE

BY DAYLE PARKER

It's not every day that toddlers get invited out to the ball — or that their parents get to relive their martini days. The Little Sweetheart Ball, happening this afternoon at the Distillery District, allows parents and children to dress up together to help mothers with breast cancer.

"We wanted something that was more hip and different for the parents," says M.J. DeCoteau, executive director of Rethink Breast Cancer, which organized the ball. "They can come out with their kids and still feel like they're part of the scene — the groovy scene they were part of pre-kids."

The Little Sweetheart Ball will raise funds and awareness for a support program for new mothers diagnosed with breast cancer.

"Our audience is sort of in that transition between — they're first-time parents and they're young, urban parents who are used to going out to the cool clubs and restaurants. They're adjusting to parenthood and we wanted to create an event with them in mind, where it's not necessarily the typical Barney-and-balloon-animals-type kids' event."

Sebastien Grainger, drummer for local rockers Death From Above 1979, will be DJing a mix of danceable hits and modern kids' songs.

Marilyn Cornblum and her husband were among the first to buy tickets. She was diagnosed with inflammatory breast cancer in June,



PETER REDMAN / NATIONAL POST

Annie, two-year-old daughter of M.J. DeCoteau, executive director of Rethink Breast Cancer, shops at Sar Remo boutique this week in preparation for today's Little Sweetheart Ball.

2003, when she was 35 and her son Max was only 16 months old.

"I joined a support group that, by accident, happened to be mostly women under 40," Cornblum says. "But there weren't any groups specifically for young women, and certainly nothing for young mothers going through breast cancer."

"There are very special issues that moms of young children have."

Simple things, like putting a child into daycare to go to treatment, can mean exposing both the child and vulnerable mother to illnesses, says Cornblum. She feels lucky to have her husband and a very supportive family system nearby to help out.

"Moms can feel really guilty," DeCoteau says. "Maybe they planned to breastfeed, or they had envisioned that first year or two going a certain way, and suddenly they're at the hospital all the time and in chemo, and just have no energy, and can barely hold their babies. It's heartbreaking."

DeCoteau says the Little Sweet-

heart Ball is the first of its kind in Canada. The idea was born following a baby boom among the four staff members comprising the Rethink office — they're already on their fifth maternity leave in the five years the organization has been around.

"We were all having babies, lots of volunteers and supporters were having babies," says DeCoteau, who has a two-year-old daughter named Annie. "And from there it just evolved with all of the coverage with all the celebrities having babies."

A silent auction with only the trendiest in baby gear will also help to raise money. Up for grabs is an Oeuf crib, which normally sells for \$1,400-\$1,500, and an ultra-modern Nest high chair, which resembles an egg on stilts. Rethink staffers even hunted down the company who made a bag worthy of an Angelina Jolie purchase in a U.S. magazine photo spread.

"We literally just cold-called them and said, 'We have to have this diaper bag that Brad [Pitt] is

getting.' And they sent us one," DeCoteau says.

The road to parenthood doesn't have to mean giving up socializing and fashion anymore. What better accessory is there than an adorable toddler in designer duds?

The show will include a fashion show, cupcake decorating and prizes for the "most fashionable tot" — and it all wraps up in time for dinner.

"It should be a lot of fun," says local designer Whitney Ross, whose line, Whitney Kids, will be featured in the fashion show. "In the end it's a big party and it's for this amazing cause, and so what's better than that?"

■ The Little Sweetheart Ball takes place today from 3:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. Tickets are \$50 per adult, which includes the entrance for one child five years and under; \$25 per additional child. The Stone Distillery Fermenting Cellar, 55 Mill St., 416-920-0980. Find more info at rethinkbreastcancer.com.

National Post

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