

Tattoos with a purpose go to a good cause

Special to The News Star

It is just a small apple tattoo to some people, but it's worth \$10,000 to SalusCare, the area's most comprehensive provider of treatment for individuals with mental health and substance use issues.

That's how much Mr. Greens Produce paid to SalusCare after 10 people accepted the challenge to have the company's apple logo tattooed on their bodies in exchange for a \$1,000 donation each to SalusCare.

The fundraiser was the brainchild of Amy Dimon, general manager of the west coast division of Mr. Greens Produce, which supplies restaurants, hotels and other food service providers.

"I owe my life to SalusCare. I wouldn't be here today if it wasn't for the treatment I received and the skills I learned that have helped me celebrate 11 years of sobriety," Dimon says.

The \$10,000 gift is the largest sponsorship SalusCare has ever received, according to SalusCare CEO Stacey Cook. As a result, the nonprofit is naming Mr. Greens Produce as the Title/Presenting Sponsor of SalusCare's signature fundraiser, "Laughter Is the Best Medicine Comedy Night" to be held August 18 at the Broadway Palm.

"What Amy has accomplished in such a short time is nothing short of phenomenal. She is an inspiration to others in recovery from substance abuse," Cook said.

Dimon became hooked on opioids at 14 after receiving prescription painkillers to treat chronic pain associated with Crohn's disease. When she was in her early 20s, her mother found her in her driveway unconscious and barely alive after she overdosed on Xanax and methadone.

She spent 12 days in intensive care but she continued abusing drugs until she was 30. Then she checked herself into Southwest Florida Addiction Services (now known as SalusCare).

"I had nothing – no money, no job, no shoes, no high school diploma, just nothing," she says now. She went through the detoxification program, res-



Amy Dimon and her mother, Sheila Dimon after receiving their tattoos.

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idential program and the women's halfway house and learned "a whole new way of living."

Today, she has a degree in computer information technology, is an executive with Mr. Greens Produce and is a member of the SalusCare Development Committee.

Amy asked her boss, Mr. Greens Produce Owner Peter Politis, when they were going to have the apple tattoos done together. His response was that he would give her \$1,000 if she had the apple tattoo.

Amy thought about it and asked Politis if he would give the \$1,000 to SalusCare instead. Knowing that SalusCare was looking for sponsors for its "Laughter Is the Best Medicine Comedy Night," she then asked if she got some friends together who would each have the apple tattoo, would Mr. Greens Produce donate \$1,000 to SalusCare for every person who got the tattoo up to a maximum of 10 people? He agreed.

Amy posted the challenge on Facebook late that night. Within a few hours, 40 people said they would do it.

"Mr. Greens Produce got involved with SalusCare through Amy. The firm's success is driven by the passion of our team members, not only regarding the



The apple tattoo that brought \$10,000 in sponsorships from Mr. Greens Produce to SalusCare. SalusCare provides treatment to those with mental health and substance use issues.

show their support," Amy said. "My 76-year-old mother even got one of the tattoos. I couldn't be happier."

During the "Laughter Is the Best Medicine" event, four local celebrities each will perform a five-minute stand-up routine for event attendees who will "vote" for the best comedic performance. An award also will be presented to the celebrity comic who raises the most money for SalusCare. The local celebrities who will exchange laughs for votes are:

■ Gina Birch, Radio-TV personality and wine aficionado

■ Michael Martin, Florida Gulf Coast University President

■ Eric Raddatz, Fort Myers Film Festival founder and *Florida Weekly* Presentation Editor

■ Amy Bennett Williams, News-Press staff writer. Nationally recognized yet-to-be-announced comedians will round out the evening, said Marc Collins, SalusCare Development Committee co-chair.

Funds raised at the event will be used to provide outpatient psychiatry and therapy to children and adolescents in our area whose families can least afford it.

Tickets for the show are \$150 each, and include heavy hors-d'oeuvres, drinks and the show and are available at www.saluscarecomedynight.org

For information about sponsorships, contact Vice President of Public Relations Todd Cordisco at 791-1575 or at tcordisco@saluscareflorida.org



Tattoo artist Rob Plante.

produce industry but also other facets of their lives. We will encourage and support these projects and give back to the communities we serve," Politis said.

Altered Tattoo and Tattoo Artist Rob Plante agreed to donate the tattoos. More than 20 people lined up at Altered Tattoo June 24 to have the tattoo, even though the cash donation was limited to the first 10 people.

"It's just amazing how friends I haven't seen in 22 years were there to