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Of Mike, Ann and the social event of the season

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By **Mike DiMauro** (/apps/pbcs.dll/personalia?!D=m.dimauro) Day staff writer

✉ m.dimauro@theday.com (mailto:m.dimauro@theday.com) [BCgenius](http://www.twitter.com/BCgenius) (<http://www.twitter.com/BCgenius>)

In the pantheon of great ideas, sure, there's remote control, central air and golf carts, among other things. But not even such paragons of comfort and convenience occupy the same airspace at what promises to be The Social Event Of The Season here in our corner of creation.

Imagine: The chance to enhance what is already a grand slam — The Miracle League Field in East Lyme that serves children with disabilities throughout the region — by honoring two of the region's cleanup hitters at a setting with water views ... but beginning the night by watching the Kentucky Derby together on the big screen.

Throw in a couple of mint juleps and someone might even utter, "Is this heaven? No, it's Westbrook."

Mad props and bon mots to Niantic Rotary, whose 2022 gala at Water's Edge in a few weeks (Derby Day, May 7 beginning at 5:30) is a can't miss. Perhaps by the end of the night, the Miracle League Field will raise enough money for Phase 2 of its evolution — adding a playscape and concession facilities — all while Rotary gives community service awards to Ann Irr Dagle and Filomena's owner Mike Buscetto.

Where to even begin?

Perhaps here: No two other people in this region emerged as bigger, brighter, leaders through the pandemic than Buscetto and Dagle. Buscetto kept the masses fed and entertained. Dagle continues to turn the unspeakable horror of losing a child into a beacon of hope with the Brian Dagle Foundation, dedicated to the healing of grieving adults as well as community education on suicide prevention and awareness. Ann and Paul Dagle were there for everyone during a time of isolation.

"Selfishly, we're able to keep our son alive by sharing our story," Ann Dagle said. "The gifts we've received from people coming into our lives have been so many. We've been able to reach more people throughout the state and well over 1,000 educators with LEARN schools through suicide prevention training programs. It's overwhelming to think we do work with people in their darkest moments. Paul and I don't take this lightly. We are always moving forward."

Of Ann Irr Dagle, Buscetto said, "how can you not support someone like Ann, who shows the fortitude to carry on, after dealing with a tragedy? She lost her son. As I celebrate the birth of my first grandson, I see how precious life is. But she carries on with that big spirit and big smile. She wants people to know she is there for them."

That was Buscetto, too, who teamed with community partners during the pandemic to provide relief and hope through food, supplies, and monetary donations. Moreover, he turned the Filomena's parking lot into the World's Biggest Outdoor Dining Room, giving patrons a safe outlet for a few social sparklers and badly needed conversation.

"All I know is Mike has a huge heart. Amazing," Irr Dagle said. "He can never say no. He's done some great things for us and supported us in whatever we do."

Now as their reputations precede them, they use their good name to help East Lyme Park and Recreation director Dave Putnam and the Miracle League field move forward.

"What Ann has done for the community is truly unbelievable," Putnam said. "And Mike? Nobody puts his money where his mouth is the way he does."

Speaking of his mouth: The night will be worth it, if only to hear Buscetto's speech. The odds are good it will be R-rated and feature the words "262 Boston Post Rd in Waterford, Connecticut." That's the Filomena's address. All part of the charm.

Tickets are available through Putnam (860-303-9914), Esther Williams (860-739-0388) or NianticRotary.org. Highly recommended.

"It's great to be recognized, but it's a continuation of a team of people trying to make our community a better place to live," Buscetto said. "My door is always open. My grandmother taught me that. If they're hungry you feed them. If they're down and out, you help them. At the end of the day, I'd like to be known as someone who did nice things for other people's families, not just mine."

This is the opinion of Day sports columnist Mike DiMauro