

## Northside Mental Health Center Holds 34<sup>th</sup> Annual Board of Directors Meeting

The Board of Directors of Northside Mental Health Center held their 34<sup>th</sup> annual meeting on January 26, 2010. The Speaker for the meeting was Susan Lang, Consumer Affairs Director of Central Florida Behavioral Health Network. She talked about her position as an advocate as well as her chance to use the gifts she has to share and educate others who have experienced, or who know someone who has a mental illness.

The meeting continued with the Auxiliary of Northside Mental Health Center presenting a check to the Executive Director of Northside. The \$34,000 check is to support the PhoneFriend Program. The money was raised through "Puttin' on the Glitz - A Starry, Starry Night".

The PhoneFriend Program is an after-school call-in program for all elementary school children in Hillsborough County, many of who are home alone and need someone to talk to about their day- the good and the not so good events. The volunteers at PhoneFriend also help with homework. There is a 24 hour story line and a 24 hour joke line available for the children. Northside is very appreciative of the work the Auxiliary does throughout the year to prepare for this event, as PhoneFriend does not receive any governmental funding and is dependent on donations from corporations and individuals in the community.

### About Susan Lang...

*Susan was diagnosed with Bipolar Disorder in her late teens. She had a self-stigma in that she was unable to share her story with others, and she suffered depression and withdrawal her senior year of high school. She had family support and attended three years of college before going into a severe depression.*

*Ms. Lang had few medications and weekly counseling for nine months, after which she was able to continue with her education and receive her degree in Occupational Therapy.*

*She later taught in a college for five years, but suffered a manic episode despite taking her medications as prescribed. She was hospitalized seven times in two months, and lost her job, even though she received good reviews from both staff and students.*

*When Susan accepted the position with CFBHN, it was reaffirming that she didn't have to be ashamed of her illness, and that perseverance is important. It has given her a chance to use the gifts she has to educate others. Ms. Lang is an ideal example of self-acceptance, taking responsibility for understanding her illness, and hope for a better future.*



Frank Turano – President, Board of Directors, Susan Harvey Hoerbelt, Ph.D. – new Board member, Cynthia Aprile – Board member.



Pictured from left to right: JoAnn Woodard - Fund-raising co-chairman, Vibeke Petersen - Fund-raising co-chairman, Marsha Lewis Brown - Executive Director of Northside Mental Health Center, and Sylvia Traina - Immediate Past President of the Auxiliary and Fund-raising co-chairman for 2010.



Marsha Lewis Brown- Executive Director of Northside, Susan Lang – Consumer Affairs Director of Central Florida Behavioral Health Network, and Cecil Woodside- Director of Community Support Center of Northside.