Ten years, 10 records. So if 10 is the highest possible score on your rating scale, then the 10th annual Deb and Jeff Hansen Foundation Spring Gala was perfection!

Led by the Hansen’s personal contribution of $125,000, total funds raised through cash donations, dinner tickets, silent and live auction, Drive for $5, checkerboard raffles and sponsorships at the mid-May event in Des Moines was $943,800! That’s a new record for the 10th consecutive year and $200,000 more than 2014.

“We started the Deb and Jeff Hansen Foundation in 2006 because we believed we could make a difference in our communities, and as leaders and business owners we owed it to our employees and ourselves to try,” said Deb Hansen. “Today we continue the tradition of the annual spring gala. Between Jeff and I and Iowa Select Farms, all of the event costs are covered so every dollar raised at the event goes directly to Foundation programs.

“The Foundation works in three core areas,” Deb said. “We support food pantries, the Backpack™ program and the pork loin giveaway because we believe in alleviating hunger and that everyone deserves a good meal.

“We support Hams for Heroes, provide pork coupons to every single Iowan in the Armed Services and provide care packages to families with loved ones who are deployed,” Deb said, “because we believe in showing our support to those who serve and their families.

“And we contribute to the expansion of the Cancer and Blood Disorders Center at Blank Children’s Hospital because we believe in improving the quality of life of children who have cancer and helping find a cure for diseases like leukemia and lymphoma,” Deb said.
DRIVE FOR $5

Speaking on behalf of all Iowa Select Farms employees and contractors, Finishing Director Allen Whiley also announced a donation from them to the Foundation of $14,030, more than double the $6,680 raised in 2014!

“Last year,” Whiley said, “we launched the ‘Drive for $5’ as a response to fielding inquiries from employees and contractors who asked how they could help with the Foundation’s activities. We were overwhelmed by their generosity.

“This year’s response was truly heart-warming. We saw representation from full- and part-time employees. From contractors and CDL drivers to maintenance technicians, manure pumpers, sow, nursery, finishing and GDU technicians – every single department at Iowa Select Farms and New Modern Concepts was represented.

“And every $5 donation has a meaningful impact,” Whiley said. “For a needy child enrolled in the BackPack Program, that’s 25 ham sandwiches; for a soldier it’s his family gathered around the table for a pork feast; for a struggling family that needs a helping hand it’s over 10 servings of nutrient-rich pork.”

NEVER QUIT

Keynote speaker for the evening was former U.S. Navy Seal Robert J. O’Neill. One of the nation’s most decorated veterans, O’Neill has received more than 52 honors, including two Silver Stars and four Bronze Stars with Valor awarded for extraordinary and heroic gallantry in action.

Having trained more than 800 special operations and tactical operators, O’Neill offered his unique insight on leadership, decision-making and how to become ‘the best of the best.’ He challenged Gala attendees to “never quit,” saying that is the single most important factor in determining success, both personally and professionally.

Other celebrities participating in the evening’s activities included Master of Ceremonies Bob Quinn, WHO radio farm broadcaster; Iowa Governor Terry Branstad and his wife, Chris; Lt. Governor Kim Reynolds and her husband, Kevin; Iowa State University head football coach Paul Rhoads and his wife, Vicki; and Bubba Sorensen and his wife, Maria.

Sorensen is the creator of The Freedom Rock, a 60-ton boulder located in rural Iowa that is repainted every year with a different Thank You for our nation’s Veterans.