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## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Healthcare Heroes Say 'I Do' at Peconic Landing's Brecknock Hall**

GREENPORT, N.Y., August 2, 2021 — Peconic Landing and Brecknock Hall were honored to host New York Tent's Healthcare Hero Wedding Giveaway on July 31, 2021. Designed to give back to a deserving couple who fought on the front lines during the COVID-19 pandemic, the giveaway was awarded to Long Island residents Shaka Ballantyne and Shannon Nigg.

"We are excited to be able to give back to the healthcare heroes who have been working tirelessly taking care of Long Islanders since this pandemic began," said David Tannenbaum, CEO of New York Tent. According to the Bohemia-based company, they received over 50 entries from deserving couples.

Shaka, 30, and his fiancée Shannon, 27, were both working in their first years as full-time radiologic technologists when they heard about the giveaway, which initially consisted of one prize, a \$40,000 tent package. Having gotten engaged just a few days prior, they entered the contest on a whim and quickly made it to the top three.

The lucky couple was notified of their win during a surprise reveal on Zoom in June of 2020. Shortly after, it was announced to the couple that along with the free tent package, they would be offered two additional donations: free venue space at Peconic Landing's Brecknock Hall in Greenport and free wedding coordination services by Jill Gordon Celebrate. After hearing about the giveaway, the two organizations happily agreed to contribute their resources and help the hardworking pair.

Brecknock Hall, a 19<sup>th</sup>-century Italianate mansion owned and operated by Peconic Landing, is known as a historic gem in the area. The not-for-profit Brecknock Hall Foundation offers educational programs and cultural events and is also available to the public as a unique and historic site for weddings, celebrations, and other group events. It is home to Peconic Landing's annual Veterans Day Wedding Giveback, which acts as an opportunity to thank military personnel and recognize them for their service.

“We thank Shaka and Shannon, and all frontline workers on Long Island, for their tremendous dedication to helping others over the last year and a half,” said Robert J. Syron, President and CEO of Peconic Landing. “We are honored to give back by providing a venue for their special day, and we wish them a lifetime of happiness together.”

Over the course of the wedding planning process, several dozen additional vendors reached out to offer their goods and services, including food, wine, flowers, bridal attire, and even personal services including massage and teeth whitening appointments. The total value of donations is estimated to be between \$150,000 and \$200,000, according to Jill Gordon Celebrate.

“The moment I saw Shannon and Shaka’s entry video, I immediately wanted to jump on board as their wedding planner,” said Jill Gordon, owner and CEO of Jill Gordon Celebrate, who operates out of East Hampton. “It felt important to honor healthcare workers during the pandemic. They’re so brave and giving of themselves, and these two have such incredible hearts. The entire experience has been a real bright spot during a dark time, and I’m continually heartened by the generosity of all the amazing vendors who are participating.”

The top three finalists were selected by New York Tent, with the winning couple chosen by a public vote over a five day period.

Shaka and Shannon started dating in August of 2016 after meeting at a bar in Hampton Bays and connecting over their faith and their desire to help others. Early in their relationship, they both decided to switch career paths and pursue radiologic technology. They were simultaneously accepted into the School of Radiologic Technology at Peconic Bay Medical Center (PBMC) and took the course together.

“We came into this field to help people,” said Shannon. “When other people were losing their jobs or struggling to put food on the table during the pandemic, we felt blessed to have meaningful work. We are young and healthy, so we were happy to do it.”

Originally from Trinidad, Shaka is a graduate of Riverhead High School and went to Suffolk County Community College before transferring to SUNY Oswego to complete his Bachelor’s degree in business administration. Throughout the pandemic, he worked primarily at Stony Brook University Hospital, but now spends most of his time split between Stony Brook Southampton Hospital and Stony Brook Eastern Long Island Hospital.

Shannon graduated from Westhampton High School and received her Bachelor’s degree in exercise physiology from the University of Tampa. She works full-time as a

radiologic technologist at PBMC, and the couple currently resides in Middle Island where they recently purchased their first home together.

“The past year has been a completely humbling experience,” said Shaka. “We are still in awe and beyond grateful to everyone who voted and to the amazing vendors and donors for their generosity. The support has been unbelievable and we can’t thank everyone enough for this great experience.”

“Everything happens for a reason,” added Shannon.

Vendors who have donated goods and services to the Healthcare Hero Wedding Giveaway include: Arnie Paperie, Art Of Eating, Beautiful By Katy And Dina, Brecknock Hall at Peconic Landing, By Hand Catering, Cupcakes & Everything Chocolate, Decco By Party Up Production, Early Bird Vintage, East End Catering, Eva Dines String Trio, Harbor Market & Kitchen, Jill Gordon Celebrate, Jilly Bean Custom Designs, Josh Zuckerman Photography, Julio Occhino Luxury Beauty, Leanne's Specialty Cakes, Lieb Cellars, Lilee Fell Flowers, Lovett Entertainment, Massage Me, New York Tent, Party Rental Ltd, Please B Seated, Remixologists, Sag Harbor Florist, Seasons Of Southampton, Service Matters, SRP Photo Booth, Sweet Fancy, The Treatery Food Truck, Tower Flowers, Valerie Barnes Film.

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*Peconic Landing is a nationally recognized, equity-based Continuing Care Retirement Community overlooking the breathtaking Long Island Sound. Located on the North Fork of a half-mile of private Sound Beach, the organization works on a mission of being the retirement community of choice for individuals age 62 and better by encouraging our members to enjoy a vibrant lifestyle and presenting ample opportunity for members to pursue their interests and passions to the fullest. For more information on Peconic Landing, please visit [www.peconiclanding.org](http://www.peconiclanding.org).*