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HOLLYWOOD



J. ALBERT DIAZ/MIAMI HERALD STAFF

**REMEMBERING:** Ciara Emanuele displays a photo of her as a baby with Joe DiMaggio like the one used on local billboards. Ciara, now 16, will sing the national anthem at Saturday's Legends charity game.

## SHE WAS JOE'S 'BABE'

■ **A Weston teen continues the family tradition of helping the Joe DiMaggio Children's Hospital in Hollywood.**

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Ciara Emanuele will be thinking of her grandfather when she sings the national anthem Saturday at the Joe DiMaggio Legends Game.

It was because of her grandfather, Frank Steffens, the former financial director of Memorial Hos-

pital, that her 8-month-old face was plastered across Broward County.

It was also partly because of him that she became a talented singer and a community service-minded young woman.

Ciara, 16, is the baby in the famous photograph of "DiMaggio and the Babe" that covered billboards in the area for 15 years, and was used in advertisements for the children's hospital.

And Saturday, Ciara, of Weston, will come full cir-

cle, using her voice to give back to the hospital where her family members have been born and died. The game is a charity baseball game that raises money for Joe DiMaggio Children's Hospital.

For Ciara, it's a continuation of a lifelong relationship with the hospital. For her family, it's another step in a generations-long commitment to the institution that has seen their loved ones through birth, life and death.

It was Steffens who first knew Ciara could sing. Claudia Emanuele, Ciara's mother, said Steffens was a hardworking man who had little time for his children. He made up for it in his dedication to Ciara, his only granddaughter. His office was a shrine to her, Claudia and Ciara said with a laugh.

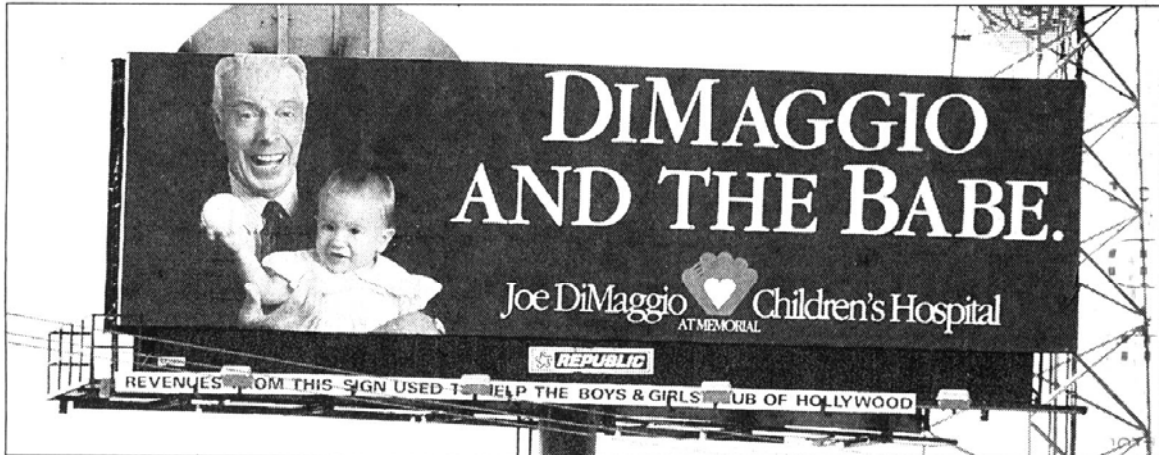
"I was like queen of the world to him," Ciara said.

Steffens first suspected

• TURN TO BABE, 2B

**FRONT PAGE**

Placement by:  
AMBIT PUBLIC RELATIONS



BOB EIGHMIE/MIAMI HERALD FILE, 1999

**FAMILIAR SIGHT:** Billboards, such as this one that stood at I-95 and Hollywood Blvd. in 1999 when Joe DiMaggio died, blanketed the Broward area for 15 years.

# Once billboard 'Babe,' she's now talented teen

• BAKE, FROM 1B

his granddaughter could sing when she was 5 or 6 years old, when Ciara made so much noise, humming, whistling and singing, that her parents paid her to stop.

And now, after choir and voice lessons, Ciara has grown into a talented vocalist. But she is also a teen dedicated to helping others. Her grandfather, she said, is a big part of who she is.

Steffens formed a special relationship with Memorial Hospital. He worked there. He would see his daughter and granddaughter born there. And later, he would spend the last days of his life there.

## IF YOU GO

- **What:** 20th anniversary of Joe DiMaggio Legends Game.
- **When:** Saturday, 1 p.m.
- **Where:** Fort Lauderdale Stadium, 5301 NW 12th Ave.
- **Tickets:** Reserved seats are \$5, and bleacher seats are \$3. Admission is free for kids 12 and under.
- **Former major-leaguers scheduled to appear:** Stan Bahnsen, Paul Blair, Ron Blomberg, Dennis "Oil Can" Boyd, Bert Campaneris, Rico Carty, Orlando Cepeda, Warren Cromartie, Mike Cuellar, Alvin Dark, Tommy Davis, Andre Dawson, Orestes Destrade, Al Downing, Oscar Gamble, Wayne Garrett, Chris Hammond, Willie Horton, Al Hrabosky, Jay Johnstone, Ed Kranepool, Bill Lee, Phil Linz, John "Blue Moon" Odom, Amos Otis, Danny Ozark, Fritz Peterson, Cookie Rojas, Manny Sanguillen, Art Shamsky, Ron Swoboda, Jeff Torborg and Tom Tresh.
- **Why:** Proceeds from the game will underwrite a planned pediatric oncology unit at the Joe DiMaggio Children's Hospital.

When his wife gave birth to a daughter who was physically frail and mentally disabled, Steffens decided to move his family close to the hospital, Emanuele said.

The decision paid off, she said, when Emanuele's mother had complications giving birth to her.

"My father felt the hospital saved my mother and me," she said.

So when he retired and was asked to be the hospital's financial director, he said yes. And the family's bond to hospital grew. Claudia Emanuele grew up five blocks from the hospital.

When Emanuele and her family were living in Fort Lauderdale, Ciara was bitten by the family dog and instead of taking her to Broward General Hospital, which was closer, Emanuele took her to Memorial.

"It was second nature to go there," she said.

### 'THAT'S YOU'

Later, Steffens was diagnosed with esophageal cancer that eventually spread through his body. When the time came when the only thing they could do was make him comfortable, they went to Memorial Hospital, where he died at 71 on Sept. 17, 2002. "We knew we were bringing him in there to die," Emanuele said. "He felt like he was at home when he was dying."

And so, another chapter in the family's history with the hospital was written.

One day, when Ciara was 9, she was in the car with her parents driving, when her parents pointed to a billboard advertising the children's hospital.

"They said, 'That's you,'" Ciara said. "I thought they were just joking."

Her mother laughs when she thinks back to the process of trying out for the photograph. Her father's assistant called and told her they were looking for babies to use for an advertisement.

She tried to get Ciara to hold a baseball and pose for the photographs she sent in to the hospital.

"I didn't know what they wanted," Emanuele said.

### A LATE ARRIVAL

Ciara and three other babies were chosen as finalists and invited to a photo shoot. The women showed up with their children at 8 a.m., Emanuele said. But DiMaggio, the Yankees legend and baseball Hall of Famer, didn't arrive until 1 or 2 p.m.

Luckily, Ciara did not need naps as a baby — she slept from 8 p.m. to 8 a.m. So as the other infants wailed and screamed, Ciara sat happily and quietly.

"This is why I think she got the shoot," Emanuele said. "She wasn't crying."

The family didn't realize the photograph would be used at all, let alone on billboards.

Emanuele said that the experience, even though Ciara was so little, helped Ciara grow into a girl dedicated to helping others.

"I think that set the tone for Ciara and her giving," Emanuele said. "She was involved in something giving already."

When Ciara was a fifth-grader, she raised \$175 for the church through a bake sale with a friend. Now, Ciara gives back by singing and directing a choir at St. Bonaventure Parish in Davie, and refuses to be paid when she performs in a church at a wedding or funeral. "If I'm doing it in a church... I want to do it for good," Ciara said. "I don't want to do it just to get paid."

The one time she did take money for a performance — after much resistance — she ended up donating it to the church.

And so Saturday represents yet another moment in the family's life with the hospital. When Ciara takes the microphone, her mother will be reflecting on how her family's connection to the hospital.

"I'm just going to think of my dad," Claudia Emanuele said. "I'm going to wish he was there."