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Submitted photo

Anthem couple Susana Martinez-Conde and Stephen Macknik will be a part of an evening combining the world of magic with the mystery of the brain. The duo have lived in Anthem for eight years, but work at St. Joseph's Hospital in Phoenix where they explore the link between what we see and what we actually comprehend.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Anthem Scientists Share Magic Of The Brain

STAFF REPORT~ 8/15/2012

Anthem residents and brain scientists at St. Joseph's Barrow Neurological Institute, Susana Martinez-Conde, PhD and Stephen Macknik, PhD will welcome Las Vegas to Phoenix for a rare star-studded event that mixes the world's greatest magic with the mysterious science of the brain.

On Sept. 17, Macknik and Martinez-Conde will take the stage along with internationally renowned magicians Mac King and the Amaz!ng Randi in an evening titled "Magic and the Brain." Mac King, who headlines in Vegas at Harrah's and the Amaz!ng Randi, who is the world's Elder Statesman of Magic, will perform as the researchers try to explain the unexplainable – the human brain.

For almost eight years, Martinez-Conde and Macknik have lived in Anthem and been leaders in unorthodox research at St. Joseph's Barrow that uses the art of magic to help the medical world understand the brain. As Harvard-trained visual neuroscience researchers, the husband and wife team have spent much of their careers exploring the link between what we see and what we actually comprehend.

As part of their Neuromagic research, Macknik and Martinez-Conde travel to Vegas regularly to meet with some of the world's greatest illusionists including Penn and Teller. In addition, a number of top magicians have traveled from around the world to Barrow laboratories to help.

The study of magic not only pertains to how and why people are fooled during magic shows, Martinez-Conde says, but also has applications in medical treatments. "We are excited about how our research could lead to medical advances that help patients with cognitive decline, and also in the field of education," she said. "If we can learn how to manipulate cognition and take advantage of the cognitive abilities people still have, we can improve their quality of life."

As Macknik noted, while most magicians realize that they are fooling their audiences, many probably have no idea how their magic tricks specifically affect the way the brain works. "Many magicians are just as excited about this research as we are," he said.

The active Anthem couple also participates with their children in tae kwon do at the ATA dojo in Anthem and enjoys community events at the Anthem Outlets and Anthem Community Center. Martinez-Conde and Macknik, who have co-authored a book, titled "Sleights of Mind: What the Neuroscience of Magic Reveals About Our Everyday Deceptions" and spoken about their research on NOVA, the Discovery Channel and CBS Sunday Morning, say they are excited to bring an event of this caliber to the Valley.

The Sept. 17 charity event at Phoenix Theater will showcase the unusual partnership between scientists at St. Joseph's Barrow and magicians who have traveled to the Institute to help medical researchers better understand the way the brain functions and how it is tricked.

The event will benefit the Barrow Foundation. For ticket information visit Barrow50.org or call the Barrow Foundation at 602-406-3041.

