

BENEFIT

Alzheimer's OC Raises 500K at Balboa Bay Resort Gala



Richard Lawrence, Jeannie Lawrence, Jim McAleer, Brett Lawrence, Michael Lancaster



Megan Hilty and Cheyenne Jackson

BY CHRISTOPHER TRELA & SHELLY ZAVALA

It started with a whisky tasting and ended with a tasty dinner. In between, the Alzheimer's Orange County gala held March 24 at Balboa Bay Resort raised more than \$500,000—a record amount for the organization, which has been holding an annual gala for 19 years.

Dubbed “Broadway Backstage: Memories,” the resort’s patio and ballroom was transformed into a glamorous backstage musical set thanks to EliteOC Productions, which brought in studio lights and professional makeup artists to help set the scene.

Our night began with a cocktail hour in the outdoor patio, where more than 300 guests enjoyed cocktails and champagne, a high-end whiskey tasting (featuring Macallan Rare Cask and Macallan 12 year—Christopher’s favorites), and silent auction bidding.

We were ushered into the ballroom for a gourmet three-course dinner created by Balboa Bay Resort Executive Chef Rachel Haggstrom. First course was a heirloom and burrata salad, followed by steak and seared Chilean sea bass with mushroom risotto. Dessert was a chocolate trio. The entire meal was impressive, especially considering the demands of creating 300 dinners at once.

Alzheimer's OC president and CEO, Jim McAleer, opened the program with his customary charm, and a video featuring the event's eight committee co-chairs welcomed the crowd.



Entertainment came courtesy of Broadway stars Cheyenne Jackson, Juan Pablo Di Pace and Megan Hilty (“Legally Blonde,” “Wicked,” “Smash”).

Throughout the evening, AOC recognized four honorees and celebrated them for their tremendous contributions to the organization:

- Philanthropy Partner Honoree: John Kelley
- Community Partner Honoree: HCP, Inc.
- Corporate Partner Honoree: Discount Tire & Service Centers
- Lifetime Achievement Honorees: Debi & Tom Pavlik

Although the evening was a celebration, the organization reminded its guests of the increasing rates of Alzheimer's disease in Orange County, and the urgency to find a treatment. McAleer announced that 25 percent

of all donations raised throughout the evening will fund AOC's research efforts, which include clinical trials education and a new research grant to fund young researchers.

After screening a short emotional video that captured the hardships of loved ones of those afflicted with the disease, a “fund-a-need” segment started with a \$25,000 commitment from the Pavlik family that was matched by sisters Alison and Catherine Beaumont.

A live auction followed, with most items going for more than their stated value.

The gala was spearheaded by an event committee that was co-chaired by Debi Pavlik, Jacqueline DuPont Carlson, Lia Iacocca Assad, Nelly Harris, Bette Aitken, Alison Hahn, Alaina Staimos, and Leriza Panem-Bacchus.

Event sponsors included Julia &



Dessert

George Argyros (Title Sponsors), Lia & Victor Assad/The Iacocca Family Foundation, Bette & Wylie Aitken, and many others.

Gala proceeds were generated through sponsorships, underwriting, ticket sales, donations and silent, live and fund-a-need auctions. All of the funds raised stay local in Orange County to support AOC's care, support and research efforts in the community.

“It's amazing how much Alzheimer's affects everyone, whether it's a family member or a friend,” noted Shelly. “I like that the event showed what they were doing to make a difference and that there is a real need.”

“And they did it in a fun way,” said Christopher. “The Broadway performers were terrific, and the cuisine was delicious. I also loved the décor—the ballroom was transformed like I've never seen, and the tiered seating was novel and afforded excellent views.”

“A lot of people are involved, and they put a lot of work into the organization,” said Shelly. “They are passionate people making a difference.”

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