

## SCHOOLPOWER'S 26<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL DINNER DANCE AT MONTAGE LAGUNA BEACH

by Samantha Washer, SchoolPower V.P. of Public Relations

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Montage Laguna Beach was the incomparable setting for SchoolPower's 26<sup>th</sup> Annual Dinner Dance on Saturday, January 29<sup>th</sup>. As SchoolPower's largest and most successful fundraising event, this year's Dinner Dance grossed approximately \$256,000 for Laguna's four public schools.

Dinner Dance Committee Chairs, Kristin Bunn, Melissa Cavanaugh and Kim Ressler, were inspired by the casual elegance found in Laguna Beach with their theme: Diamonds in the Sand. The evening was much more than just dinner, although that was one of the highlights.

There was the incredible silent auction with items ranging from horseback riding lessons to trips to Hawaii. Once everyone settled into their seats for dinner, this year's Fund-A-Need initiative: SuccessMaker software, was introduced by SchoolPower president, Robin Rounaghi.

Fund-A-Need is a specific initiative selected at the recommendation of LBUSD leaders. This year, an anonymous donor was so impressed by SuccessMaker's results, that \$130,000 was given, prior to the event, so that all 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders at both elementary schools have access to the program, as well as, the mini laptops needed to run it. It is the largest individual gift in SchoolPower's history.

For the 2011 Fund-A-Need, Dinner Dance patrons were asked to raise their paddles so that the program could be extended to 3<sup>rd</sup> grade at both elementary schools. And raise them, they did! The Hearts of Montage kicked off the bidding with \$10,000 and other big donors followed suit with Brent Martini and Wendy Nicholson Martini adding \$20,000 and always-generous Holly and David Wilson and George and Susie Wood, each at the \$5,000 level, raising enough to achieve the evening's goal of \$60,000!

Once the Fund-A-Need was complete, it was time for the always-exciting Live Auction. Luxury stays at Pelican Hill Resort, a Crevier BMW for a year, U2 360 concerts at Angels Stadium and gourmet dinners prepared by the chefs at Claes at Hotel Laguna and Studio at Montage Laguna Beach were some of the items which brought in an impressive Live Auction total of \$80,600.

Another fun fundraising element was the raffle. 75 silver pouches filled with sand and cubic zirconia earrings were sold for \$100 each. One lucky bag, belonging to a surprised and delighted, Ketta Brown, held the winning number entitling her to a beautiful Penny Preville designed diamond earring and pendant set, valued at \$2,900 and donated by Fredric H. Rubel Jewelers. The raffle was a quick sell-out and everyone went home a winner, even if they weren't the grand prize winner!

One surprise of the evening came after the live auction. SchoolPower president-elect,

Marcus Skenderian took the microphone and led the room filled with 300 people in a toast to outgoing president, Robin Rounaghi, who is finishing up her second consecutive term as president. A very surprised and touched Rounaghi accepted a bouquet of flowers and a well-deserved standing ovation from the crowd for her commitment to Laguna's schools.

Wrapping up the evening was the night's live entertainment including popular local band, The F-Jams, as well as gaming tables for those who needed to take a breather from all the dancing. The F-Jams had the dance floor packed, ending with a sing-along from the very appreciative audience.

"I've been coming to this event for a lot of years now, and every year there's something a little bit different, which keeps it interesting. I attend because it supports such an important worthy cause and benefits our children in so many ways. But besides that, it is always a fun night and I really look forward to this event every year," remarked longtime Dinner Dance attendee Krista Shaw.

Attendees of special note this year included School Board President Theresa O'Hare; School Board Member Betsy Jenkins; Superintendent of Schools Sherine Smith; Assistant Superintendent Instructional Services, Nancy Hubbell; LBHS principal, Dr. Don Austin; Thurston Middle School principal, Dr. Joanne Culverhouse; Top of the World Elementary School principal, Ron LaMotte; and El Morro Elementary School principal, Chris Duddy.

SchoolPower is still seeking donations for Thurston's Mac Lab Fund-A-Need and LBHS' College Prep Fund-A-Need. For more information about these and SchoolPower, the Laguna Beach Education Foundation, visit [www.lbschoolpower.org](http://www.lbschoolpower.org) or call (949) 494-6811.