

Library Gala and Impressive Success

Cathy Tyson

It was a party more than ten years in the making. Who knew that the citizens of Lafayette could come together to turn a retro shoebox library from a frog to prince charming and in the process unite an entire community to support a commitment to education and lifelong learning?

Start with cocktails for a sell-out crowd of six hundred, add spectacular food by SpringLoaf Catering, black tie dress, music, dancing, a gigantic white heated tent covering half of Mount Diablo Boulevard and you have some sense of the marvelous party that was the "Celebrate a Novel Evening" fundraiser gala. **Effervescent guests and a sense of neighborliness helped make this affair part block party and part prom.**

It took a year to plan and an army of volunteers to come to fruition. Party **Co-Chairs Rhonda Andronico and Renee Rogers worked diligently to ensure everything was seamless**, from the shuttle service transporting bejeweled guests from the BART parking lot, to a welcome red carpet, to loads of indispensable heat lamps. Last-minute rain and construction that was truly down to the wire only complicated matters.

The pair wants to give special credit to Overaa Construction who were so generous and accommodating with pre-party special requests, and to SpringLoaf catering who planned classic American food around classic American novels as a continuation of the party theme for this new classic American library. Rogers comments on all the advance preparations, "It's like a wedding – you do everything possible, now it's just time to enjoy."



Photo by Doug Kohlen

A key figure from the initial idea stage and throughout the process is Mayor Don Tatzin. Reflecting on the development of this spectacular facility he said, "Creating the Lafayette Library and Learning Center (LLLC) proved that when residents and businesses share resources, talents and credit, the entire community benefits. I will enjoy this evening's celebration for many reasons and invite everyone to attend the Grand Opening on November 14 to experience what their efforts achieved."

Librarian Susan Weaver is, "so proud of the staff," who shuffled 80,000 books to the new facility in a "very short amount of time." Even though they had a layout plan, there were a few eleventh-hour changes driven by customer service, for example moving large-type books to the front for seniors.

With homecoming going on just across town at Acalanes, everyone at the Gerringer house was getting dolled up. School Board Member Teresa, looking fabulous with husband Michael, was happy with her raffle ticket sales, beating out a friend's total.

Gwenn Lennox, Director of the Lafayette Library and Learning Center Foundation noted there was a wait list, and even people calling on the day of the gala looking to

attend. The \$175 ticket price didn't scare off residents who wanted to celebrate this extraordinary library.

Contra Costa Head Librarian Ann Cain describes libraries as "the community's living room." On this night, the living room was overflowing with sparkling attendees among of sea of gentlemen in black tie. **Patrons were overwhelmingly pleased with the interior of the new library - commenting on the unique design, functional layout and spaciousness.**

Wanting to spotlight arts in the community, volunteer Liz Rosenberg and friends arranged for representatives from "the most amazing school music programs." Jazz bands, choral ensembles, chamber groups from Acalanes, Stanley, Campolindo and Bentley were part of a total of 27 musical groups in three venues that filled the night with music. The gala wrapped up with Mixx Company, a ten piece San Francisco dance band. Happy party-goers were tripping the light fantastic.

Kathy Merchant, President of the LLLC Foundation Trustees, thanked a tremendous amount of people that made it all possible, and described the Gala as, "simply unbelievable!"

See more Gala photos at www.lafayettelib.com