

Friendship Center:

Festival of Hearts

By ERIN J. SMITH / CASA

GIVING FROM THE HEART HAS NEVER BEEN A PROBLEM FOR THE FRIENDSHIP CENTER in Santa Barbara, which celebrated its 10th annual Festival of Hearts fundraiser on February 7th.

Friendship Center, an adult day service center, provides innovative programs, daily meals and snacks, field trips, transportation, and other services to enhance the lives of older adults and their caregivers.

“I feel heartened by the support of our loyal donors and the community,” said Justine Sutton, the Event and Development Coordinator at Friendship Center. “Without this type of service, elders feel isolated and their families have a hard time coping. The name ‘Friendship Center’ really applies to the lovely friendships that spring up here.”

More than 100 guests filled the canopied courtyard and enjoyed the music of Rebecca Kleinmann’s Brazilian Jazz Trio, wine from Buttonwood Farm Winery, and a delicious luncheon provided by Lorraine Lim Catering. Catherine Remak emceed the event and magician Mark Collier entertained young and old alike with his dazzling card



Katherine Merritt and Jack Hewett, Heart Monitor Volunteers, and Ellen Orlando, Artist & Volunteer



Catherine Remak, Emcee with Mark Collier, Magician

tricks. Following welcoming remarks by Board President Marty Moore and Executive Director Heidi Holly, the vivacious and hysterical Gail Rappaport conducted a live auction. Mini cupcakes were provided by Sweet Buttercup Cupcakes for dessert, and Karen Hunter gave a passionate testimony to how the Friendship Center has helped her and her father. “I would have had to quit my job at the City to take care of him,” said Hunter.

“Friendship Center has provided that last ounce of freedom he has to get away from all the old people where he lives.”

Local high school students created papier-mâché hearts for decorations, and each guest was invited to pick one to take home as a party favor. Additionally, local artists and crafts people donated “heart-art” of all shapes and sizes to be auctioned off as part of the fundraiser. “People respond well to them because hearts are symbols of love and that’s what Friendship Center is all about,” said Sharon Morrow, who is the designated “Heart Wrangler” responsible for organizing all the hearts.

Proceeds from the event support Friendship Center’s HEART (Help Elders at Risk Today) program. Many of Friendship Center’s members have Alzheimer’s or other cognitive disorders related to aging, and HEART allows all elders to participate regardless of income limitations.

“Loneliness is the pain of aging,” said Sey Kinsell, a retired pediatrician and Friendship Center supporter. “Holding hands or playing checkers is all it takes to build that connection.”



Marty Moore, Board President; Justine Sutton, Event/Development Coordinator; Heidi Holly, Executive Director



Board Member Suzanne McNeely (left) with event attendees Dave Raber and Joan Frenz.



Peggy Odgers, heart artist; Susan Johnson, Board Secretary and Event Committee Chair; Barbara Robinson, past Board Secretary; Susan and John Hanna, Board of Directors and past Big Heart award winners

Friendship Center provides respite, support, and education, enabling families to continue to be engaged in their community, careers, and commitments. Friendship Center is located at 89 Eucalyptus Lane and hours are Monday through Friday, 8am to 5pm. For more information, contact Friendship Center at 969-0859 or visit www.friendshipcentersb.org.