

# Crane's "Come As You Were" Gala

By **Julia Rodgers** / Special to CASA

**T**HE PARENTS ATTENDING CRANE COUNTRY DAY SCHOOL'S annual fundraising gala have established a solid tradition of putting their creative skills to good use

when it comes to finding a costume, and this year's *Come As You Were* party did not disappoint.

Wedding gowns, punk rockers, tennis short-shorts, and Madonna look-alikes were just a few of the ways that parents had fun channeling their past selves for the event. "Everyone went all out with their costumes," said Ella Brittingham, who with her gala co-chair Suzanne Deardorff, wore matching pink satin prom dresses, complete with wrist corsages. "There were people I didn't even recognize."

Another way the Crane gala followed



Live and silent auction chairs: **Melinda Werner, Rachael Stein, Elizabeth Gabler, and Kelly Simmons**



Crane Board President **Laura Shelburne** with Gala co-chairs **Suzanne Deardorff** and **Ella Brittingham** in pink

tradition was its success as a fundraiser, which exceeded the committee's goal. "Every dollar raised at the May 7th event goes directly to the school," said Brittingham, who explained that sponsors had underwritten the entire cost.

Brittingham also found creative ways to save money, such as using the school's hot lunch plastic plates for dinner.

The only change this year was the venue: Crane's bucolic 11-acre campus has served as the setting for the past five years, but this year the committee instead staged the gala for the

250 guests just up the hill from the school, at QAD's Ortega Hill Road campus, which has stunning views of Santa Barbara and the ocean.

"We decided to mix it up this year and change locations," said Deardorff, who noted that a side benefit was that parent volunteers had much less decorating work to do this year since QAD's majestic setting was so breathtaking.

The evening's festivities included a special tribute to Upper School history teacher Dan McCaslin, who is celebrating his 31st year at the school. A heartfelt video featured parents, colleagues, and current and past students.

"To be at a school for 31 years and still vitally

connect with middle school students is extraordinary," said Joel Weiss, Crane's head of school. Crane is a kindergarten through eighth grade school located in Montecito.

Crane parents also showed their creative talents during the live auction, when nearly 30 parents surprised and delighted the audience by recreating popular television and musical acts from the 1970s. Crane parents Kevin and Kerri Sanford set the tone by impersonating Kenny Rogers and Dolly Parton

playing the role of game show host Chuck Velour, while his wife Kelly Simmons ended it with a hilarious impersonation of Edith Bunker from *All in the Family*.

Wearing unbuttoned gold sparkling shirts, three Crane dads strutted their stuff as the Bee Gees, lip-synching *Stayin' Alive*. Other skits included scenes from *Charlie's Angels*, *The Brady Bunch*, and *Fantasy Island*. Crane parent Ted Simmons led the live auction by

playing the role of game show host Chuck Velour, while his wife Kelly Simmons ended it with a hilarious impersonation of Edith Bunker from *All in the Family*.

The evening ended with wild dancing to the sounds of King



**Christian and Kisa Heyer, Scott Brittingham** and Head of School, **Joel Weiss**

Bee, featuring Crane's own staff member Joel Jamison.

More than 50 parents served on the gala committee, but the key players included: Elizabeth Gabler and Rachael Stein, Kelly Simmons and Melinda Werner, Diane Brown and Debbie Mackall, Susan Jackson and Jennifer Markham, and Tiffany Gordon. Tamara Jensen of IDO Events and Crane's development staff, Katy Berrey, Molly Green, and Rhoda Lauten also worked hard to make the event a success.

Top sponsors included Ella and Scott Brittingham, Diane and Tim Brown, Randi and Terry Cunningham, Alex and Bill Daugherty, Elizabeth and Lee Gabler, Anne and Houston Harte, Debbie and John Mackall, Montecito Bank and Trust, Lynda and Mark Schwartz, Laura and Craig Shelburne, Whale Beach Foundation, and Leslie and Robert Zemeckis.



**Randi Miller** and **Downing Denison**



**Kerri and Kevin Sanford**, who channeled Dolly Parton and Kenny Rogers

Photos by Teresa Fleisch