

Lake County Wine Alliance announces beneficiaries for 10th annual charity Wine Auction

Contributed by Lake County News Reports
Monday, 06 July 2009
Last Updated Monday, 06 July 2009

LAKE COUNTY — Seven nonprofit organizations, five high schools, senior centers and health programs have been selected as beneficiaries of this year's Lake County Wine Auction, announced Margaret Walker-Stimmel, president of the sponsoring Lake County Wine Alliance.

The Wine Alliance, a nonprofit organization of wineries, winegrape growers, vineyard owners, related businesses and community supporters founded in 2000, raises funds to benefit "the arts, health and community" of Lake County, while promoting Lake County as a premier growing region for fine wine grapes. An all-volunteer board of directors and auction committee plan and direct the annual charity event.

This year's Wine Auction, the 10th annual, will take place at 5 p.m. on Saturday, Sept. 19, at the National Guard Armory, north of Lakeport.

In these times of challenging economic uncertainties for many local nonprofit programs and agencies, the sponsors recognized the need to limit expenses in order to donate more funds to the beneficiary groups.

Walker-Stimmel noted that over \$714,000 in proceeds has been contributed to Lake County programs from the first nine events, held at the Buckingham Golf & Country Club with the support of owner Mark Wotherspoon.

The Wine Alliance board has expressed its appreciation to Wotherspoon and his staff for their exceptional contributions to the community through hosting the auction activities.

This year's beneficiaries are the Allegro Scholarship Program, Lake County Hunger Task Force, St. Helena Hospital Clearlake Mammography Fund, Stitch and Give Knitters, Vietnam Veterans of Lake County, People Services Inc., Senior Law Project Inc., the fine arts programs at the five Lake County high schools and the Meals on Wheels programs at five senior centers.

A special "fund a need" portion of the live auction will benefit the Ely Stage Stop & Country Museum project of the Lake County Historical Society.

Beneficiaries were selected by the Wine Alliance board of directors and a committee of community members, and chaired by Judy Luchsinger.

The event is a black tie affair that showcases fine foods and wines from Lake County restaurants, caterers, and wineries. The ticket price is \$100 per person and includes participation in the live and silent auctions and dancing to live music, provided this year by the LC Diamonds.

Tom DiNardo, sommelier diplomate with the International Sommelier Guild, is this year's guest auctioneer. He will be joined by Stephanie Green, sommelier and owner of the Kelseyville wine shop, Focused on Wine.

Andy Beckstoffer, chairman and CEO of Beckstoffer Vineyards, and a major North Coast vineyard owner, is the Wine Auction event chair. Congressman Mike Thompson, chair of the 2008 benefit, is a special guest. Beckstoffer and Thompson continue their longtime support of Lake County and the expanding local wine industry. Rob Roumiguere, partner in Roumiguere Vineyards and Wine Alliance treasurer, is this year's master of ceremonies.

A record number of applicants submitted their funding requests to the Wine Alliance, demonstrating the number of programs in Lake County seeking financial assistance.

The recipient organizations will use their grants for the following projects.

The Arts: The Allegro Scholarship Program assists exceptional music students with financial needs and will receive \$2,000. The fine arts programs at each of the five high schools in Lake County (Clear Lake High, Kelseyville High, Lower Lake High, Middletown High, and Upper Lake High) will share the balance of funds in this category.

Health

The Lake County Hunger Task Force will receive \$2,500 to assist senior centers and food banks with produce from its community gardens.

The balance of funds will be shared equally by the five senior centers that provide "meals on wheels" or

nutrition programs and the St. Helena Hospital Clearlake Medical Imaging department for its no-cost mammograms to low or no-income women.

Community

The Stitch and Give Knitters will receive \$1,000 to help them provide knitted items to the women's shelter, pregnant teen program, Head Start program, and newborn hats to the area hospitals.

The Lake County Chapter of Vietnam Veterans of America will receive \$5,000 for its advocacy and outreach programs, including the Avenue of Flags at local cemeteries, and providing gifts to patients at extended care facilities.

Remaining funds in this category will be shared between Peoples Services Inc., and Senior Law Project Inc. People Services has been meeting the needs of the developmentally disabled in Lake County for 35 years. The Senior Law Project provides legal help to elder clients in Lake County.

The Ely Stage Stop & Country Museum project of the Lake County Historical Society will receive special attention through a "fund a need" live auction lot. The recently relocated structure is considered to be Lake County's oldest "stick-built" building, dating to the late 1850s. It will be the centerpiece of a new interpretive museum for Lake County's agrarian past.

Additional events include winemaker dinners at several locations on Friday, Sept. 18, at 6 p.m. More details about hosts and locations will be announced later. The proceeds from the dinners will also be contributed to this year's beneficiaries. Tickets will be \$60 per person, after the purchase of a ticket for the Wine Auction.

Members of the Wine Alliance board include Margaret Walker-Stimmel, president; Marie Beery, vice president; Pamela Shine-Duncan, secretary; Rob Roumiguere, treasurer; and Kaj Ahlmann, Judy Luchsinger, Wilda Shock, and Janet Thompson, directors.

More information, tickets and reservations, and sponsorship opportunities may be obtained by contacting the Lake County Wine Alliance by phone, 866-279-WINE, by mail, P.O. Box 530, Kelseyville, CA 95451, or at www.winealliance.org.