

Stu News Newport

Tom Johnson's Newport Beach News and Community Forum

Keep the Promise benefit raises funds for The Wooden Floor

Nearly 300 guests gathered at the 12th Annual Keep the Promise Wine Tasting Benefit at Big Canyon Country Club on September 13, in support of The Wooden Floor, a Santa Ana creative youth development nonprofit with a track record of sending 100 percent of its low-income graduates to college. The evening, which has become Orange County's premier wine tasting benefit, broke its own record by grossing nearly \$410,000 for the organization, with more gifts expected. Over the past 12 years, the benefit has netted almost \$3 million to support The Wooden Floor's goal of transforming young people in low-income communities through the power of dance and access higher education.

More than 200 bottles of 12 of the globe's most extraordinary wines – each scoring in the top 1 - 3 percent in the world by leading wine critics – were uncorked throughout the evening, including the 100 point 2011 M. Chapoutier Ermitage Le Pavillon from Rhone, France, which is valued at \$350 per bottle, and the 99 point 2012 Realm The Bard Proprietary Red Wine from Napa Valley, valued at \$300 per bottle. The wines were hand-selected over the period of several years and generously donated by Newport Beach residents Janice and John Markley, longtime and fervent supporters of The Wooden Floor who founded the benefit in 2007 as a way to use their love of wine to raise funds for the actively growing organization.



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Submitted photo

(L-R) Volcom Co-Founder Thom McElroy; Andrea Young, artistic director of The Wooden Floor; Falon Baltzell, CEO of The Wooden Floor; Dawn S. Reese, board emeritus; and Lift Campaign Chairman Damien M. Jordan

Under candlelight in Big Canyon's richly appointed clubhouse, guests were treated to a toast led by the organization's Lift Comprehensive Campaign Chairman, Damien M. Jordan, who helped kick off the evening in celebration of The Wooden Floor's 35th Anniversary of changing lives through dance. Guests sampled small plates of rosemary roasted Colorado lamb, halibut brandade, sesame crusted ahi tataki pops, lobster tacos, pork belly sliders, wild mushroom and black truffle risotto served from a parmesan wheel, a raw bar featuring shucked oysters, snow crab claws, and jumbo shrimp cocktail, and other stunning global fare created by Executive Chef Nick Wynn and Master Sommelier Steven Poe to complement the wine selections. Guests enjoyed an elegant setting designed by The Fashionable Event, reminiscent of wine country but with a modern twist. The space was filled with florals designed by Corona del Mar Florist, including grapevine wreaths, rustic raised bouquets, traditional Napa wine crates and modern tin vases filled with a variety of florals and branches.

The crowd-favorite blind tasting competition resulted in a tie by Jesse Lo Ré and RJ Sommerdyke, who both correctly guessed seven out of the 12 covered wines, winning a selection of the night's featured wines. Other items up for grabs included opportunity drawings for a \$2,500 shopping spree at South Coast Plaza; a Hermès gift basket filled with gorgeous accessories valued at more than \$3,000; a sophisticated \$700 dining experience at Mastro's Steakhouse; a collection of five magnums of red wine; and a collection of five magnums of white wine. Silent auction items included a four-night stay at a luxury cabin in Promontory, Utah; a private five-course wine dinner for 10; as well as sports and arts experiences.

The Wooden Floor's successful outcomes and poised students were the main focal point of the night. The highlight of the evening came from 14-year old Mariana Garcia, speaking on behalf of her fellow The Wooden Floor students as well as her sister Cristina, who graduated from The Wooden Floor in 2016 and is now in the Nursing program at UCLA.

"My goal is to excel in high school and continue on to college, just like my sister Cristina who did it before me. And I want to make a difference, like her. I am hoping to become either an obstetrician or a special education teacher," said Garcia. "I have four sisters who are in special education classes and I understand the importance of teachers who can relate to them."

Keep the Promise Honorary Co-Chair Janice Markley, The Wooden Floor Board Chairman Arthur Ong and CEO of The Wooden Floor Dawn S. Reese, shared, "We believe when dance is used as a means of social change, innovation flourishes into courageous life-changing outcomes for the children we serve and moves The Wooden Floor's exciting mission forward, which helps move our community forward."

For more information on The Wooden Floor Foundation, visit www.thewoodenfloor.org.