



Jeff Edmons (SDYS music director), Arlene Harris and Martin Cooper (honorary chairs), Armi and Al Williams (honorees), Sue Greenway (SDYS board chair), Perla Browlie (SDYS Angels' Angels chair; event chair), Dr. Michael Remson (SDYS president/CEO)



Jim Algert and Maurine Beinbrink, Defarest Files, Tamara Paige (SDYS Teacher of the Year awardee), Russ Sperling and Gus Pagsanjan



Francisco Escobedo, Leticia Hernandez, Irma Gigli (SDYS Angels' Angels member), Mark Bennett (SDYS Angels' Angels member), Anni and Arthur Lipper (she's event founder)

Bringing back music ed

STORY AND PHOTOS BY VINCENT ANDRUNAS • SPECIAL TO THE U-T

SAN DIEGO YOUTH SYMPHONY FUNDRAISER

Many of us still remember our days in the elementary education system, when lessons in the arts — including music — were part of every primary school's curriculum. Some kids really liked it; some others weren't interested — but all had the opportunity to see for themselves. But politics and budget restraints changed that, and now most schools take little or no responsibility for arts education. That's truly unfortunate, because an amazing amount of talent can be brought to light with just a little encouragement and exposure to music's joys.

Ten years ago, San Diego Youth Symphony and Conservatory began partnering with the Chula Vista Elementary School District to bring music education back to the school day for all students in the district's 46 schools. Many students later matriculate to the Conservatory programs.

Since 1945, SDYS has given thousands of young musicians the opportunity to study and perform classical music at a highly advanced level. Originally, like most youth symphonies, participation was merit-based — only students who could meet required performance standards were accepted. But today, there's a more inclusive philosophy; SDYS has ensembles at every level, from beginners at age 7 to pre-professionals up to 25. Their ChIMES program (Childhood Introduction to Music Education with Smiles) builds healthy attachments between toddlers (birth to age 5) and their caregivers through hands-on playing with instruments, singing and percussion.

No student who wants to participate is turned away. There's a very reasonable tuition for SDYS' Conservatory programs, but for families that can't afford it, financial aid is available in the form of music scholarships. This means that any child can participate in SDYS' programs.

Funding for these scholarships comes from private donations, and from the organization's annual "Encore!" gala. Perla Browlie chaired the 2019 fundraiser last weekend at the Casa del Prado in Balboa Park — where many of SDYS' programs take place. Martin Cooper and Arlene Harris were honorary chairs, and Al and Armi Williams were presented with the Conductor's Award for their years of dedicated service and support.

The event started with wines, champagne, hors d'oeuvres, and refreshing sangria in the building's courtyard. Guests moved indoors for spirited performances by SDYS' Opus Festejo Strings and the more advanced Chamber Orchestra — both amazingly proficient ensembles. Afterward, the Opus Esperanza and Alegria Percussion Parade played, leading the 120 guests to dinner in a big white tent nearby.

There, Catering Solutions served an excellent three-course dinner featuring braised short ribs. President/CEO Dr. Michael Remson illustrated SDYS' story through short videos and stellar student performances. Event proceeds for music scholarships topped \$120,000, and the evening closed with a spot-on Tchaikovsky performance by the 26-member Chamber Strings ensemble.



Karen Haze, Bill Coltellaro, Tina Dyer (SDYS board vice chair), Steve McCann, Kathy McCarthy (SDYS Angels' Angels member), Eric Cohen



Dick Ahlborn, Suzie Pirtle, Barbara Malk, Inder and Gigi Anand, Patty Rome



BERNADETTE JOHNSTON NARRATIVE IMAGES

From left, Tiffany LaMarche, Nicole Velazquez, Deacon Jim Vargas, Michelle Wiseman, Joleen Guckian



BERNADETTE JOHNSTON NARRATIVE IMAGES

Billie Jorgensen, Isabel Rafferty, Mark Jorgensen



SHARON HINCKLEY

Camille Hill, Claire Reiss

Reaching for the stars

FATHER JOE'S GALA TO HELP HOMELESS CHILDREN

Father Joe's Villages held on May 4 its 35th annual Gala to Help Children Reach for the Stars.

The event at the US Grant Hotel in downtown San Diego raised nearly \$900,000 to support children who are experiencing homelessness. The funds will benefit programs for children, including Father Joe's Villages' Therapeutic Child-care Center that provides preschool and after-school activities and food, shelter and health care.

According to research, children who are homeless are four times as likely to have delayed development and twice as likely to repeat a grade in school, Father Joe's Villages said.

"A major part of my children's and my success is because of Father Joe's Villages," said Michelle McElroy, program graduate and mother of six now in permanent housing. "(I didn't) have to worry about, 'Am I going to be able to clothe my kids? Are they going to get school supplies?' Father Joe's Villages just supplied it all. If it weren't for Father Joe's Villages, I wouldn't be where I am today."

More than 350 guest attended the black-tie philanthropic event, which hon-

ored a person and two organizations for their commitment to helping the poor and homeless San Diegans.

Barbara Claire Caster received, in memoriam, the Bishop Leo T. Maher Award, which is presented to those who put the needs of the poor first. The award was accepted by her husband of more than 65 years, Terry Caster. The Caster family's support of Father Joe's Villages has spanned more than 30 years.

Las Patronas received the Father Joe's Villages Award, acknowledging those who exemplify the Villages' creed of compassion, respect, empathy, empowerment and dignity.

Congregation Beth Israel's Hunger Project received the Founder's Award, in honor of those who have shown a longstanding commitment to the Villages' foundation and vision. Volunteers with the Hunger Project have served food on Sunday mornings at the Villages for more than 33 years.

"I'm left with immense gratitude for the hundreds of generous individuals who came together to support our mission at the gala," said Deacon Jim Vargas, president and CEO of Father Joe's Villages.

BAIL

FROM B1
The DeDe McClure Community Bail Fund and similar organizations in cities nationwide are part of a Mother's Day weekend effort to bail out mothers under the umbrella organization National Bail Out.

"Bail is really a game of who can pay to play," Moore said. "...If you have the money, you go home; if not, you sit in jail at least until your court date."

That is not a fringe view of the cash bail system — California lawmakers approved a bill last year that would have ended cash bail in the state. It was signed by then-Gov. Jerry Brown and supported by other top state officials, judges, probation officers and civil rights groups.

"A person's checking account balance should never determine how they are treated under the law," then-

Lt. Gov. Gavin Newsom, now governor, said in a statement last year.

But the landmark law, which was supposed to go into effect later this year and would have given judges greater discretion to decide who should remain jailed ahead of trial, was put on hold in January after a national coalition of bail agency groups opposed to the bill launched a referendum drive and got more than the 400,000 signatures necessary to put it up to voters in the November 2020 election.

Opponents of the bail system overhaul argue that abolishing the cash bail system would put violent offenders on the street and put 3,200 registered bail agents out of business.

According to The Hamilton Project's 2018 study on the economics of bail and pre-trial detention, roughly 460,000 people occupy county and city jails each day in the U.S., despite not having been



COURTESY PHOTO

Organizers with the DeDe McClure Community Bail Fund prepare care baskets for mothers getting bail.

convicted of a crime. Some are held because they're flight or safety risks, but most are held because they cannot afford bail.

And according to the Vera Institute of Justice, black people are 3.6 times more likely to be jailed than white people.

That's why the focus of National Bail Out and its lo-

cal affiliates, like the DeDe McClure Community Bail Fund, is primarily on black mothers and caregivers.

"We know what happens when black and brown mothers go to jail: they subsequently lose housing, lose jobs and/or lose custody of their children," Moore said. "Bail is a hardship, and we know black and brown wom-

en bear the brunt of that hardship."

As of Friday afternoon, the DeDe McClure Community Bail Fund had raised more than \$25,000 to bail out mothers, Moore said. At least 70 individuals had donated, though most of the money came from a \$20,000 gift by someone who wished to remain anonymous.

On Thursday night, the activists posted bail for three mothers, whose bail amounts ranged from \$650 to \$2,000, Moore said. Five more mothers were released Friday.

The group did not know the mothers beforehand, but found good candidates through public records while looking for mothers jailed on suspicion of low-level, non-violent charges, Moore said. Each individual bail amount also needed to be relatively affordable so as to maximize the number of mothers that could be freed.

"One of those mothers was arrested and jailed for

sleeping outside," Moore said of a woman released Thursday. "She would have spent five days in jail before her court hearing. This is an example of the larger story of how we criminalize the poor."

Moore said the mothers for whom bail was posted, complete strangers to the activists, were often "overwhelmed, surprised and happy ... that somebody cared enough to want to release them and free them in time for Mother's Day."

The local bail fund organizers — staunchly opposed to California's "predatory" bail industry, as Moore put it — paid entire bail amounts themselves rather than paying a percentage of it by going through bail bond agencies.

Donations to the group can be made at bit.ly/WeFBMSD. The group said donations not used this weekend will be saved for future bail-out efforts.

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