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Grad Night

By Sophie Braccini



Congratulations to all of Lamorinda's happy graduates (pictured is graduation at Campolindo High School) Photo Doug Kohen

After nearly a year of planning, Parents Club (PC) volunteers from Acalanes, Campolindo and Miramonte high schools are finally resting after successful Class of 2010 Grad Night parties. Beyond the cost and sweat equity put into these parties lays the real purpose of the affairs - to provide a safe and memorable evening for Lamorinda's graduating seniors. Common to each PC is a unanimous appreciation for the local business community, which provided essential financial, material and logistical support for these ambitious and intricate parties. Big and small, local and national, the business community rallied behind the effort and gave generously despite the difficult economic times.

A part of the cost of Grad Night was covered by the tickets that the students purchased, but not enough to purchase all the gifts and food that were distributed that night. "I've been surprised at how much we got in donations, because of the economy," says Campolindo parent Margaret Qualls, who was in charge of donations. "The fact that it is a safe and sober event, keeping the students off the road, gets people excited and they want to contribute to that," believes Qualls who, like her counterparts at Acalanes and Miramonte, started by sending a mass mailing to all Lamorinda businesses, followed by a lot of foot work. "I walked the streets of Lafayette, Orinda and Moraga," says Miramonte's Maggie Sharpe, "there was a lot of pen work and follow up."

Sharpe noticed that small local businesses, even though they are hurting, contributed more willingly than some of the larger corporations. "We worked from a master list from the previous year, but some of the corporate donors like See's Candies and Apple did not want to contribute this year." On the other hand, some businesses went beyond what was asked; like Dana Lim at Lafayette McCaulou's, who had collected lotion and perfume samples for months and wrapped them individually for the seniors.

"I am compelled to say how impressed I continue to be by the Lafayette community," says Nancy Falk, Grad Night co-chair at Acalanes. "Even before we could ask, several members of the Lafayette business community (such as) Diablo Foods and Oakwood contacted us so they could donate and support this June's Grad Night event at Acalanes. They do this every year, to help us provide a safe and sober event for our graduating seniors."

Another striking fact is that some businesses give to all three high schools, whether or not they are located in their respective city, such as Diablo Foods, Round Table Pizza, Mangia, Oakwood Athletic, Entourage Spa, Pizza Antica, and others. As a whole, Lafayette businesses, maybe because they are more plentiful in number, receive more appeals and give accordingly.

Altogether, such donations represented a substantial percentage of the total budget of the party. "This year, the total value of cash and merchandise donations was about 20% of our budgeted income," says Qualls, "This does not include the substantial donations that are received from the community at Preview night. Most of the donations were either food or prizes for students."

The relationship benefits all involved - businesses supported Measure A, the schools ask parents to shop locally, and chambers of commerce give to educational foundations. "The theme of (Miramonte's) Grad Nite celebration was "X", as in the Class of 2010, and their eXtraordinary, eXciting, eXtreme spirit and achievements," said co-chair Diane Oshima, "We feel those same descriptive apply to all the businesses that supported the Grad Nite event. We truly appreciate their help and contributions; it is these relationships that are the foundation of our close knit community," stated Oshima. "Just reminds me how lucky I am, that we get to live here," concluded Falk.



Miramonte Grad Night Committee finance chair Rita Trumbo (left) and committee co-chairs Corinna Sassano and Diane Oshima load up decorations for the celebration Picture courtesy of Miramonte Grad Night Committee.

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