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Rotary gala event supports victims of sex trafficking

By Pippa Fisher



Gala guests checking the silent auction items
Photo Pippa Fisher

It was a crowded scene at Oakwood Athletic Club Saturday, March 23 as the Lafayette Rotary Club hosted a benefit gala for local nonprofit New Day for Children, an organization which provides safe housing, school and therapy to girls ages 10 to 18 who are victims of sex trafficking.

Attendees came to the fun event in a generous mood and, with the help of Auctioneer Mike Jones from Charity Benefit Auctions, were encouraged to spend big money.

The Rotary had help from the Interact Students of Acalanes and the National Charity League Lamorinda Chapter.

Diners heard from a number of speakers including Rep. Mark DeSaulnier. Powerful testimony came from Mason Gizard, the son of a sex trafficking victim who told of his childhood experience and of being homeless.

Speaking publicly for only the second time Avery McBeth, a New Day for Children graduate, told her story and testified that the organization had saved her.

"The Rotary did a fantastic job. It was well planned and well executed," said New Day for Children executive director Sharon Wood, adding, "I'm so proud of Mason and Avery."

New Day for Children opened its doors in 2009, providing long-term residential care. The organization has seen 85 girls through the program thus far. Although some girls have stayed as long as five years the average stay is closer to 15 months. It is one of very few such facilities throughout the country. New Day relies on donors, as it accomplishes its work without state or federal funding.

Support from the gala will be used to provide schooling, a safe place to live, medical, dental and vision needs as well as specialized therapy, including therapeutic horse camp for the girls.

Although a final count of money raised at the gala was not available before going to press, it is expected to be substantially over \$100,000, according to Wood.

Anyone interested in learning more about the organization can visit www.newdayforchildren.com.

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