

The Crowd: NFL stars huddle locally

March 07, 2012 | By B.W. Cook



SPONSORS: Tyler Barth, Athletes First CEO
David Dunn... (Daily Pilot)

Athletes First, a Newport Beach-based sports agency that represents some 80 professional football players, joined forces with the Orangewood Children's Foundation to present the 2012 Athletes First Classic.

The event attracted more than 700 guests for a major Friday night gala at the St. Regis Monarch Beach Resort. The weekend also included a golf event, which attracted 180 players on the field, including celebrity athletes **Aaron Rodgers, Todd Heap, Brandon Jacobs, and Reggie Wayne**, to name a few.

The major event was chaired by **Stephanie Argyros, Wing Lam and Jeff Roos**. Funds are still being tallied but organizers expect to raise more than \$600,000 net from both events, all benefiting the Orangewood Children's Foundation.

The evening at the St. Regis honored **William Wang**, chief executive officer of Vizio Inc., and **Jim Harbaugh**, head coach of the San Francisco 49ers. The roster of famous faces in the crowd reads like a "who's who" in the modern sports world. National Football League players, including **Derek Anderson** from the Carolina Panthers, **David Binn** from the Denver Broncos, **Joe Flacco** from the Baltimore Ravens, **Greg Jones** from the New York Giants and **Matt Leinart** from the Houston Texans were a few of the football stars supporting the Athletes First gala.

Additional famous names included **Kai Forbath, Nick Hardwick, Ricky Jean Francios, Casey Matthews, Von Miller, Ryan Taylor, Adam Snyder, and Eric Wood**. Local VIPs in the crowd supporting the event were Newport Coast's **Glenn and Mindy Stearns** joining Athletes First Chief Executive **David Dunn** and agency president **Brian Murphy**. Dunn also serves on the board of the Orangewood Children's Foundation and shared the success of the evening with fellow members **Bruce Fetter**, board chairman, **Chris Jones** and **Stuart Bernstein**.

The evening began with a cocktail reception and silent auction in the Monarch Ballroom, followed by dinner in the Pacific Ballroom, which included the awards presentation to honored guests Wang and Harbaugh. The crowd dined on a duo of short ribs and mizo glazed cod.

Everyone was up on their feet table hopping, meeting and greeting all the star athletes. Cell phones were going wild, cameras were flashing and there was plenty of autograph signing during dinner. One couple attending brought their adolescent son who came with his football and spent the entire night roaming the ballroom collecting signatures on the pigskin. This was one kid's sports dream come true.

The evening's event committee deserving recognition for their hard work included **Brian Bachhuber, Keri Dugan, Todd Henderson, Carl Johnson, Scott Sawicki, Stan Spencer**, and Orangewood Foundation board members **Frank Suryan Jr. and J. Chris Walsh**. Major sponsors of the event included **Bob and Suzy Barth**, the Argyros Family Foundation, Acra Aerospace, Lennar Charitable Housing Foundation, Starkey Hearing Foundation, and the St. Regis Monarch Beach Resort.

* Glamorous restaurateur **Elizabeth An**, chief executive of House of An, and owner of AnQi by Crustacean at South Coast Plaza, kicked off the Chinese New Year of the Water Dragon in charitable spirit. She created a program collecting cans of food to be donated to the Second Harvest Food Bank of Orange County in cooperation with employees at the various shops at South Coast Plaza.

An's plan offered employees of the upscale retail center a gourmet family "meal to go" in exchange for a donation of canned food for the food bank. The drive lasted a total of six weeks and recently concluded, resulting in a collection of 1,385 cans of food to be donated.

Recommend 0

0

0

Tweet Submit +1

Recommend 0

0

0

Tweet Submit +1

In addition to the donation of the food, South Coast Plaza joined with Elizabeth An and AnQi matching the number of cans with a dollar donation turned over to Second Harvest Food Bank executive director **Joe Schoeningh**.

An placed the donation in a "lucky red envelope" in keeping with her Vietnamese heritage as well as the Lunar New Year tradition of presenting gifts of money. It is estimated that the financial donation will provide more than 7,500 meals to Orange County residents who are hungry.

Making this all possible were some 95 retail establishments at South Coast Plaza and some 700 employees who donated food for the drive. Some of the charitable stores participating included Rolex, Between the Sheets, Burberry, Catimini, Cole Haan, David Yurman, Eileen Fisher, Escada, Frette, Prada, Pucci, Ferragamo, Tourneau, United Colors of Benetton and the USC Collection Shop.

THE CROWD runs Thursdays and Saturdays. B.W. Cook is editor of the Bay Window, the official publication of the Balboa Bay Club in Newport Beach.