

The Crowd: 'Black and White Ball' nets more than \$1 million for CASA

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Back row, from left: Hannah An, Jacqueline An, Monique... (Daily Pilot)

People often say that following one's passion will lead to success.

American entrepreneur Mark Cuban, owner of the Dallas Mavericks NBA franchise, modifies that statement by offering "that success comes from following one's best effort."

Last week in Orange County, one woman proved that passion combined with effort can indeed make a discernible difference. **Elizabeth An**, chief executive of House of An, joined her extended family — including husband **Gordon Clune**, grandmother **Diana An**, parents **Helene and Danny An** and sisters **Hannah, Jacqueline, Monique and Catherine** — in offering their business' support and unmatched passion and effort.

The Ans helped raise more than \$1 million for an organization known as Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) at its annual dinner fundraiser held at the Hyatt Regency Huntington Beach Resort & Spa.

It was the most successful fundraising event ever produced by CASA, and organizers hope to net over \$800,000 for the nonprofit that serves Orange County's severely abused and neglected children facing issues with the legal system.

In addition to honoring the An family for their tremendous involvement, the evening's success was also due to the passion and the effort of another outstanding Orange County couple: **Lourdes and Ted Nark**, co-honorees and co-chairs of the evening.

There are many generous and dedicated Orange County citizens who turn out week after week at fundraising dinners for a plethora of worthy causes. They are called upon repeatedly to buy tables in support of the particular need.

The average cost of a table for 10 at any given event can range between \$2,500 and \$25,000. Big donors will often write checks for \$50,000 and \$100,000 for a table at a cause that has significant meaning in their lives. Donors often invite family, friends and business associates to be guests at a table or two.

At the CASA dinner, Elizabeth An, stunning in a Victorian-inspired black and white formal gown by Alberta Ferretti, husband Gordon Clune along with relatives and friends purchased 20 tables. Some 200 guests filled the Hyatt ballroom, with an overflow crowd of more than 800 donors making all the difference for the charity that crossed the \$1-million mark.

This is no easy task.

They called the party the "Black and White Ball," and the crowd arrived in their penguin best. The women were sexy and chic, many in short cocktail dresses and skyscraper high heels accompanied by their handsome men in their finest Gatsby attire.

Chaired by **Nancy Eaton, Britt Meyer, Lourdes Nark and Wendy Tenebaum**, the massive assemblage converged upon the Hyatt's reception lobby for shoulder-to-shoulder cocktails and bidding on one of the season's most lavish silent auctions.

The ballroom doors were opened at 7 p.m. to reveal a seemingly endless view of tables draped in glittering white cloths and surrounded by black gloss-painted Chiavari chairs. White orchids centered the sea of tables.

Guests streamed in from the cocktail reception as the society orchestra filled the room with high-energy music.

VIP guests in the crowd included Hollywood executive **Chris McGurk** and his wife **Jamie**, Los Angeles-based news anchors **Christine Devine** and **Wendy Burch**, television star **Alan Thicke** and his wife **Tanya, Suzanne Cantor-Fisher**, and **Linda Thompson**, the former wife of Bruce Jenner, music mogul David Foster and one-time girlfriend of the late Elvis Presley.

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Local stars in the crowd included the glamorous **Elizabeth Segerstrom** in a strapless black and white contemporary gown including a sweeping train, the always elegant **Betty Huang** with husband **S.L. Huang**, South Coast Plaza's **David Grant** and **Debra Gunn Downing**, escorted by top Orange County "legal eagle" and expert "surfer dude" **Charles Kanter**, mover and shaker **Larry Higby** with his wife **Dee**, **Mark and Inga Beder**, **Tawny Sanders**, **Silvia Damiani** and **Lizette Du Pribus**.

As dinner was served, special guest speaker **Laura Schroff**, a media executive and author who penned the best-selling book "An Invisible Thread: The True Story of an 11-Year-Old Panhandler, a Busy Sales Executive, and an Unlikely Meeting with Destiny" shared her amazing life story befriending a child of poverty from a drug-abused home who was living on the streets of New York City. She has appeared on numerous television programs.

Capping the evening was a performance by chart-topping vocalist **Taylor Dayne** who's some 20 singles have helped to sell more than 75 million albums worldwide. Among other highlights of the evening was the phenomenal success of a live auction, which included the offering of an "Around the World" dinner for 10 featuring the work of master chefs Helene An, Celestino Drago, and Josiah Citrin, which sold for an astounding \$50,000.

Others deserving recognition for their support of CASA include **Don and Susan Kang**, **Bob and Britt Meyer**, **William and Joan Cvengros**, **Richard and Nancy Eaton**, **Larry and Wendy Tennebaum**, **Shel and Cathy Bachrach**, and **Bob and Bano Pozin**.

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.