

United Way's Red Feather Ball ^{12/9/12} ^{SBNP}

I guess only in Santa Barbara would you find a couple hundred people stepping out in the evening moonlight to support Fun in the Sun.

But that is how it is every year when the United Way throws its Red Feather Ball. This gala supports the nonprofit's special initiative for children called Fun in the Sun.

Many supporters turned out for the fundraiser, held at Fess Parker's Doubletree Resort: Diane and Selby Sullivan, Blas and Mary Garza, Mara Abboud, Wayne and Sharol Siemens, Jeff and Margo Barbakow, Ron and Mary Werft, Betsy and Chip Turner, June and Jorgen Kjaempe, Terry Ryken, Joyce Shaar, Mary Ellen Tiffany, Bill Pessa, Bibi Moezzi, George and Anne Leis, Stan and Betty Hatch, Joanne Funari and Carlos Plascencia.

Fun in the Sun is a national award-winning summer learning program targeting low-income, at-risk students and is designed to improve academic, social and behavioral skills. Volunteers, sponsoring agencies and funding partners work together to address the long-term effects of summer learning loss and subsequent achievement gap on students, their families and the community.

There are 250 kids attending five program sites from Santa Maria to Carpinteria for seven hours a day, five days a week. The results? Absolutely astounding — which is why this program is getting attention and financial support throughout the county. These kids are improving their reading skills *two full grades* in the seven-week program.

So many of the attendees readily

understood the benefits not only to the students but ultimately to the community, from Sheriff **Bill Brown** with **Donna** to event sponsors including **Sue and Ed Birch, Elizabeth and Ken Doran**, Taylor Associates & The Ware Group, and Santa Barbara Bank & Trust.

I'd say that the event co-chairs **Sue and Ed Birch** and **Jo** and the beloved late **Barry Berkus** had a good time with the Italian theme. Fess Parker's Doubletree ballroom was transformed with an Italian motif and the walls were covered with theatrical backdrops depicting a Tuscan village. We all dined on Italia-inspired fare while we enjoyed the program.

Executive Director **Paul Didier** proudly told the audience that the United Way of Santa Barbara County has earned a 4-star (highest rating) for accountability and transparency from Charity Navigator.

Val and Bob Montgomery were honored with the 2012 Abercrombie Community Excellence Awards for their community-wide contributions, such as the Music Academy and CAMA. Previous honorees that I saw in attendance included **Larry Crandell** (2005), **Michael Towbes** (2004), **Leslie Ridley-Tree** (2003), **Peter MacDougall** (2009) and **Bob Bryant** (1998).

The second Abercrombie Award was presented to Deckers Outdoor Corp., which has a corporate policy of encouraging and supporting employee contributions — financial and time — to the community. Deckers CEO **Angel Martinez** explained it succinctly:

"In this room we are not hurting, but we want to make sure that others are being taken care of."



Erin Graffy



From left, former honorees **Michael Towbes** (2004) and **Leslie Ridley-Tree** (2003), who were also underwriters for the gala event, with **Brian King, Anne Towbes** and **Victoria Hines**. Mrs. Ridley-Tree introduced the **Montgomerys**, who were recognized for their years of contributions to community organizations.



Among the many attendees enjoying the dance floor, from left: longtime supporter **Mary Jean Vignone**; **Dennis Forster**, who has served on the Endowment and Gift Planning Services Committee; and **Karen Knight**, leadership services officer at United Way of Santa Barbara County and Red Feather Ball coordinator.