



Mission Celebrates its Open Doors at Benefit Gala Honoring Connie and Dr. Peter Spenuzza

San Juan Capistrano, Calif. (September 20, 2021) – After a long hiatus, Mission San Juan’s incredible *Romance of the Mission* benefit gala was finally held on Friday, September 17 on the historic grounds of Mission San Juan Capistrano. With limited attendance and health protocols in place, nearly 350 contributed to the evening’s success with gross proceeds of just over \$650K.

“This year’s benefit gala held a deeper meaning in what it portends and represents to finally be able to host the *Romance of the Mission* in 2021. On behalf of the Board, we extend a gracious thank you to our collective of angels for supporting this historic landmark and acting as gracious advocates and stewards,” said Mechelle Lawrence Adams, Mission San Juan Capistrano’s executive director.

During the evening program, Mission Preservation Board Chair George O’Connell recognized Connie and Dr. Peter Spenuzza for their longtime philanthropy and support of the Mission where Connie has served on the Preservation Foundation Board of Directors for over 15 years. The couple sponsored three tables and gave all attendees special gift cards featuring their 18th century Spanish Colonial art collection. On display in the Mission’s special Resurgam (or main entry), an early 18th century polychrome and gilded angel sculpture from Venice, Italy greeted guests as they entered the Central Courtyard for dinner.

Following the pre-concert reception and recognition of the Spenuzzas, guests enjoyed an inspiring concert by American singer, songwriter and actress Loren Allred who made her debut with the Platinum-selling song *Never Enough* from the musical soundtrack to *The Greatest Showman*. Allred performed magnificently in the ruins of The Great Stone Church with a song set including *Never Enough*, *This is Me*, *Skyfall* and a benefit gala tradition, *When the Swallows Come Back to Capistrano*. Allred will soon embark on a world tour with the acclaimed vocalist, Andrea Bocelli.

As guests made their way into the Central Courtyard for dinner, the Mission’s historic bells were rung by members of the Juaneño Band of Mission Indians Nathan Banda and Michael Gastelum.

An exquisite four-course, plated dinner was hosted by Inn at the Mission San Juan Capistrano with wine pairings graciously provided by Rancho Capistrano Winery and Miura Vineyard & Clos Pissarra for the reception and dinner.

The Most Reverend Bishop Kevin Vann said the dinner blessing and other notable clergy attendees were Monsignors Stephen Doktorczyk, Vicar General and The Reverend Michael McKiernan, Pastor and Rector at Mission Basilica.

Major underwriting was provided by Kerry and Gavin Herbert of Roger's Gardens who donated the evening's floral design and decor and Lugano Diamonds, Newport Beach provided four-and-a-half carat rose gold and round cognac diamond earrings valued at nearly \$12K.

Additional opportunity drawing items were generously provided by Inn at the Mission San Juan Capistrano, Swiss Connection, Inc. and Jean-Jacques Mamie Fine Jewelry, and Jim Curwood of Buy My Bikes.

Gala committee members each received a commemorative gold candle. Longtime Mission supporters who passed away during the pandemic, along with three others who could not attend due to serious health issues, were remembered by the placement of seven white candles in the Ruins while an eighth candle represented gala attendees.

Valet services were provided by Brand Enhance Parking and Margaux Pierog Kugelman provided the spirits marking the evening's success. All net proceeds will benefit the care and stewardship of the nearly 245 year old landmark.

For more information or to learn about how to support Mission San Juan Capistrano, visit www.missionsjc.com.

About Mission San Juan Capistrano

Known as the "Jewel of the Missions," Mission San Juan Capistrano is a historic landmark and museum that features permanent exhibits with original artifacts as well as traveling and temporary exhibits. Orange County's only Mission, the site is home to Serra Chapel, The Great Stone Church and the original padres' quarters of the South Wing and promotes faith, education, preservation and cultural event programming.

Founded on November 1, 1776, by Saint Junipero Serra as the seventh of 21 California missions established by Spain, Mission San Juan Capistrano is owned by the Diocese of Orange and receives no church or state funding. The Mission Preservation Foundation, comprised of business and community leaders, is its fundraising entity committed to ensuring education, preservation and its long-term historic and religious significance.

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