

Mission San Juan's 2023 Romance of the Mission Gala to Honor Farmers & Merchants Bank and the Walker Family

San Juan Capistrano, Calif. (April 26, 2023) – The coveted Romance of the Mission benefit gala returns to historic Mission San Juan Capistrano on Friday, September 22, 2023. The Mission Preservation Foundation Board of Directors proudly announces Farmers & Merchants Bank and the Walker family as this year's honorees and the female vocalist trio *Lyric* as featured concert artists.

Farmers & Merchant Bank Chairman/CEO Daniel K. Walker says, "Giving back to organizations that provide such a powerful service to the community is a privilege. We value the Mission's preservation and stewardship of its historical site as well as the events that bring our neighbors together and create a strong sense of community."

The gala theme, "If These Walls Could Talk" underscores the many chapters of change and challenges for the Mission and ties to the significant support that Farmers & Merchants Bank made to ensure the ongoing operations of the Mission during the pandemic. Since 2007, the institution has also supported Mission events including the Mariachi Festival, Return of the Swallows celebration, Music Under the Stars Summer Concert Series, Capistrano Lights to name a few.

"With the pandemic causing the Mission's closure, we know we would not be in the fully operable and accessible situation that we are today without Farmers & Merchants Bank and the Walker Family's assistance in obtaining much needed PPP funding. We are so proud to work with them and recognize their extensive support at this year's gala," said Mission Preservation Board Chair George O'Connell.

The annual live concert in the Ruins of the Great Stone Church will feature *Lyric*, the trio of harmonizing female vocalists to perform from their diverse song book spanning decades of music throughout the 20th century.

Inn at the Mission San Juan Capistrano will return as the event's hospitality and catering provider with Executive Chef Adrián Hernández at the helm. Other returning partners include George and Eden O'Connell, O'Connell Family Foundation, Tony and Melinda Moiso, Rancho Mission Viejo Company, Roger's Gardens, Waldorf Astoria Monarch Beach Resort, Farmers & Merchants Bank, Rancho Capistrano Winery, Brand Enhance Parking & Hospitality, BBJ La Tavola Specialty Linen, Signature Party Rentals along with a new supporter, BCT Entertainment.

Tickets and underwriting start at \$1000. For underwriting opportunities, contact Mechelle Lawrence Adams at (949) 234-1311, email mlawrence-adams@missionsjc.com and Darlynn Kitcher at (949) 234-1308, email dkitcher@missionsjc.com to be added to the wait list for individual tickets.

The Gala's 2023 opportunity drawing tickets are \$100 and include packages at Inn at the Mission San Juan Capistrano and Waldorf Astoria Monarch Beach Resort to date. For advance tickets, contact Mariela Martinez at (949) 234-1312, mmartinez@missionsjc.com. For general gala information, visit www.missionsjc.com.

Gala net proceeds will fund and student education and field trips to the Mission's soon to be released, "If These Walls Could Talk: Remembering the Builders," audio tour that educates listeners about the history and sacrifices endured with the Mission's founding as well as important preservation projects.

About Mission San Juan Capistrano

Known as the "Jewel of the Missions," Mission San Juan Capistrano is a historic landmark and museum that features exhibits, five-language audio tour, festivals and public programming. As Orange County's only mission, the site is home to Serra Chapel, the Ruins of The Great Stone Church (circa 1796) and original padres' quarters.

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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