



Romance of the Mission Gala Honors the Walker Family/Farmers & Merchants Bank Raising Nearly \$280K for Preservation and Education

San Juan Capistrano, Calif. (September 29, 2023) – The highly anticipated *Romance of the Mission* benefit gala was held on the historic grounds of Mission San Juan Capistrano on September 22 with nearly 400 guests in attendance. Farmers & Merchants Bank and the Walker Family were honored for their long-time support of the historic landmark. Proceeds of close to \$280,000 will benefit the Mission’s education and preservation programs.

During the evening program centered on the theme, *If These Walls Could Talk*™, Mission Preservation President George O’Connell lauded the Walker Family and Farmers & Merchants Bank for their ongoing support of community programs and events and their significant assistance in securing financial support for the Mission throughout the pandemic.

Farmers & Merchants Bank Chairman and CEO Daniel K. Walker spoke on behalf of the family saying, “We are honored to serve the good people of San Juan Capistrano and we value the Mission’s preservation and stewardship of this historical site and the events that bring our neighbors together to create a strong sense of community. Our commitment is to each of you.”

In her opening remarks, Mission San Juan Capistrano Executive Director Mechelle Lawrence Adams said, “Tonight’s’ celebration serves to remind us that, we too, are builders, and that your names are among the long list of special people who have worked, served, and lived to ensure Mission’s relevance, protection, and place as one of both worship and history, education, and celebration for nearly 250 years.”

An evening highlight was a live concert performed in the Ruins of The Great Stone Church (Circa 1812) featuring *Lyric*, a trio of harmonizing female vocalists performing music spanning the 20th and 21st centuries. In an awe-inspiration finale, the trio performed a first-ever, reimagined composition of the famed *When the Swallows Come Back to Capistrano*.

As guests made their way to the Central Courtyard for dinner coordinated by Inn at the Mission San Juan Capistrano Executive Chef Adrián Hernandez, the historic Mission bells were rung by Michael Gastelum, Mission bell ringer.

The Reverend Monsignor J. Michael McKiernan gave the dinner blessing followed by a deliciously curated four-course, plated dinner served by the Inn at the Mission San Juan Capistrano team led by General Manager Matt Harrison. Wine pairings were generously provided by Rancho Capistrano Winery with beer pairings by Trevor's at the Tracks.

Major underwriting was provided by George and Eden O'Connell, Tony and Melinda Moiso, and many special friends who came together to support the Foundation's efforts. Kerry and Gavin S. Herbert, Jr. of Roger's Gardens oversaw the evening's floral design and décor. Lugano Diamonds of Newport Beach gifted an exquisite pendant necklace showcasing a ruby cross with 7.5 carats and an 18k gold chain adorned with rubies and diamonds valued at over \$15K for the opportunity drawing. Additional opportunity drawing items were generously donated by Inn at the Mission San Juan Capistrano, Waldorf Astoria Monarch Beach Resort & Club, Jim Curwood of Buy My Bikes, San Juan Capistrano and Geoff Spencer of Sonance Foundation.

Partnership efforts with Brand Enhance Parking & Hospitality, BBJ La Tavola Specialty Linen, 3:16 Bakery Shop and Signature Party Rentals elevated the event by crafting a one-of-a-kind dinner and concert experience.

For more information and a complete listing of donors, friends, and supporters visit www.missionsjc.com.

To learn about how to pledge for next year's gala on September 13, 2024, contact Mechelle Lawrence Adams at 949.234.1311.

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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