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### **GALA RAISES FUNDS FOR MISSION PRESERVATION AND MUSEUM EXPERIENCE**

San Juan Capistrano, CA - September 23, 2009 -- Mission San Juan Capistrano held its 11th annual *Romance of the Mission* benefit gala, in support of preserving Orange County's only Mission, on September 11th. With more than 400 guests in attendance, the benefit gala generated over \$430,000 in much-needed funds for both ongoing museum and preservation efforts, including work throughout the grounds, Mission artifacts and exhibitions.

"The evening was a great success. In times like this, to be able to raise this kind of funding goes to show you how much the Mission means to the community," said George O'Connell, Mission Preservation Foundation Board Member.

To date, funds raised have benefited the Great Stone Church, Serra Chapel project, and such museum expansion and upgrades as:

- In the South Wing, introducing new interactive exhibits, signage, and repairs to tell the story of the padres who lived at the Mission and the role of Abraham Lincoln in California mission history.
- Preparing a new temporary exhibit about the gold rush and California statehood, set to open in the West Museum Wing October 15th.
- Developing the California Mission Resource Studio which now features information about all 21 of the California missions through hands on activities.

"The *Romance of the Mission* benefit gala provides a magical experience that is very different from other fundraising events," said Mechelle Lawrence-Adams, Executive Director of the Mission. "The Mission Preservation Foundation focuses on providing an unparalleled experience which we hope captivates our guests and reminds them of the importance of this incredible landmark. In turn, many who attend the event are inspired to get involved and support the Mission's education, preservation and museum programming through gifts of support throughout the year, and at this event in particular."

Community leaders such as Joan Irvine Smith, Jim and Rachel Everett, Rancho Mission Viejo leadership, Wylie and Bette Aitken, Mozelle and Myron Sukut, Sheriff Sandra Hutchens, as well as many others were in attendance.

The evening's events began with a pre-concert reception compliments of Young's Market Company and Trinitas Cellars with cellist Steve Velez of Mark Wood Entertainment, Inc.

This was followed by Benise, who was armed with his Spanish guitar, world class band of musicians, and flamenco dancers to perform an incredible and electrifying performance in the ruins of the Great Stone Church.

During the evening Mission Preservation Foundation Board Members George O'Connell and Connie Spenuzza recognized Marybelle and Sebastian Musco for their generous donation of \$25,000 and celebrated Supervisor Patricia Bates' dedication to the Mission for her long history of providing leadership benefiting the quality of life for South Orange County residents.

In the Central Courtyard of the Mission, dinner was served, donated, and catered by the Ritz-Carlton, Laguna Niguel. During the dinner hour, guests were treated to specialty wine pairings provided by Ignatius Cellars Clare Valley South Australia.

Following dinner, an opportunity drawing was held and winners Jim Parr, Chris and Vicki Walters, and Sybil and Ali Cayir won such items as:

- Charles Krypell, 18K White Gold Aquamarine (10.4cts) and Pave Diamond (3.3cts) set bracelet and matching Ring. Total Value \$16,600 donated by Traditional Jewelers.
- Silversea Cruises, LTD Cruise-for-Two Lisbon, Portugal - Civitavecchia, Italy March 11, 2009 for 9 days. Total Value \$15,590 donated by Silversea.

- Two Nights Stay in a Four Bedroom Villa. Relax and Replenish with Two Amber Gold Massages In the Spa and a Round of Golf for Two. Total Value \$7,500 donated by The Resort At Pelican Hill Newport Coast, Southern California.

The Mission is thrilled to celebrate the individual gifts of board members and long-standing supporters, including Marybelle and Sebastian Paul Musco, who have provided major underwriting this year. Additionally, the Mission is grateful for the Ritz-Carlton, Laguna Niguel, Shine Lighting, Traditional Jewelers, Young's Market Company, Classic Party Rentals, and Couture Flowers, to name a few, who despite the economic challenges of today, have steadfastly continued to provide in kind support for this event.

***About Mission San Juan Capistrano:***

*Known as the "Jewel of the Missions," Mission San Juan Capistrano is a historic landmark and museum that boasts of quality permanent exhibits featuring original artifacts as well as traveling and temporary exhibits on a wide variety of topics.*

*The site itself serves as a living outdoor museum with original buildings constructed by Native Americans in the 18<sup>th</sup> century including the Serra Chapel, Great Stone Church, and the original padres' quarters of the South Wing.*

*The Mission was founded on November 1, 1776 by Padre Junipero Serra as the seventh in the chain of the twenty-one California missions established by Spain, and is Orange County's only mission. Every year, over 50,000 students visit the Mission and engage in an inspirational learning experience via the Mission Matters programming, as part of their State required California history studies.*

*Mission San Juan Capistrano is owned by the Diocese of Orange and is supported by the Mission Preservation Foundation, which is comprised of business and community leaders committed to ensuring the long term preservation and viability of Orange County's only Mission. The Mission receives no funding from either the Church or the State of California and charges admission funds as a means of providing public access.*

*Mission San Juan Capistrano is located at 26801 Ortega Highway, San Juan Capistrano, CA 92675. Open Daily 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Closed Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Good Friday afternoon. Admission is \$9 adults; \$8 seniors (60 years or over); \$5 children (ages 4 to 11); and children ages 3 and under are admitted free. Free audio guide with senior and adult admission. For more information, call (949) 234-1300 or visit [www.missionsjc.com](http://www.missionsjc.com).*

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