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Mission San Juan Capistrano's Benefit Gala Nets \$198,000 and Announces Gate House Preservation Project

San Juan Capistrano, Calif. –The 2010 *Romance of the Mission* held on the grounds of historic Mission San Juan Capistrano on September 10 netted \$198,000 and was attended by 431 guests. The Mission Preservation Foundation made a significant announcement unveiling its plans to construct a new entry and gift shop that preserves the 1770's historic building and returns it to museum use.

Mission San Juan Capistrano executive director Mechelle Lawrence said, "This fundraiser was the beginning of a new chapter in the Mission's history. The Gate House Preservation Project will be nothing short of excellence in design, safety, compatibility and respect for the historic site." She went on, "The project will allow much needed preservation of the old gift shop building which is both historically and architecturally significant because it is the only brick building on site that dates to the founding period. Because of wear and tear as well as deferred maintenance, the building is in dire need of conservation treatment."

Romance of the Mission featured a magnificent live concert in the ruins of the Great Stone Church with Orange County native and internationally acclaimed soprano Robin Follman. Backed by the Ron Kobayashi Quartet, Follman captivated guests with a wide selection of both classical and contemporary music.

Rancho Mission Viejo's Vice President of Operations, Gilbert Aguirre, was recognized as honorary event chair by Mission Preservation Foundation Board Chair George O'Connell in a moving presentation lauded by both board members and event attendees. Aguirre

has been integral to the conservation of the Serra Chapel, Great Stone Church and South Wing.

The elegant evening began with a cocktail reception in the Mission's lush front gardens followed by the concert in the ruins of the Great Stone Church. Guests then entered the Main Courtyard for a delicious Spanish flair-plated four course candlelight dinner hosted by The Ritz-Carlton, Laguna Niguel accompanied by wine pairings from Ignatius Cellars.

Board member Madeline Swinden recognized fellow Benefit Gala committee members Diana Arrigoni, Barb Beier, Georgianna Hales and Mozelle Sukut for their masterful design of the evening's event.

Major event supporters included The Ritz-Carlton, Laguna Niguel; Traditional Jewelers; Shine Lighting Company; Classic Party Rentals and Southern Wine and Spirits and Young's Market Company. Next year's Benefit Gala is already slated to take place on September 16, 2011.

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 18th 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.

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