

Student's forum

Mom's Night Benefit Worth Thousands



Event Chair Tammy Long (second from left) shares a toast with a few of the volunteer models at "A Mom's Night of Fashionable Fun," the El Segundo Educational Foundation's November 19 fundraiser at Occasions event venue downtown. The benefit drew over 100 women and raised about \$5,000 for area schools.

By Erik Derr

Question: What do you get when you combine showcase fashions, comedy club humor, educational values and a large and varied group of school district staffers and mothers on a Thursday night?

Answer: About \$5,000 in donations and lots of smiles.

"A Mom's Night of Fashionable Fun," held November 19 at the Occasions special events venue in Downtown El Segundo, was a first-of-its-kind fundraiser for the nonprofit El Segundo Educational Foundation, which supports programs of the El Segundo Unified School District. "We never had an all moms event before," said Foundation coordinator Wanda Kaminski. "Moms had a night where they didn't have to think about the kids or homework."

Attended by about 130, the event included a fashion show --- in which educators and parents donned outfits from trendy Downtown boutique Frocks and Rocks --- and local comedienne Kelsey Durkin left the audience "rolling in the aisles" with a steady stream of parenting-related one-liners, Kaminski said. It was one of about four outings the Foundation expects to hold this school year in its effort to raise at least \$450,000 for the District by June.

Since its inception in 1983, the Foundation has raised over \$2.7 million in the name of promoting educational excellence throughout

the District, which serves more than 3,200 students. The Foundation is equally focused on making "El Segundo a highly desirable place in which to educate its children and to live, work and raise a family," according to a mission statement posted on its website.

Dr. Geoff Yantz, District Superintendent, said his schools have earned notable recognition in recent years, giving the community reason to feel "proud of the many awards bestowed" upon its children. Those honors included El Segundo High School, recognized in 2007 as a California Distinguished School and named --- along with El Segundo Middle School and Center Street Elementary --- to the 2009 "Scholar Schools" Honor Roll by the California Business for Education Excellence Foundation, which works toward improving student achievement. The high school also earned a six-year accreditation term, the highest category possible, from the Western Association of Schools and Colleges. Richmond Street and Center Street Elementary Schools were as well recognized as California Distinguished Schools in 2008. Center Street was named to the WASC "Scholar School" in 2007 too.

Nonetheless, El Segundo's schools weren't able to escape the lagging economy's sting. At the start of the school year, the District financial office called for about \$1.3 million in budget cuts to cover an expected 18 percent

This Week's Question:

What are your favorite places to shop?

Last Week's Question:

Where are the best local surf spots?

El Porto because the waves are always big.
L.A.

Pier Ave. Manhattan Beach.

J.R.

Haggerty's in Redondo Beach.
A.A.

Iowa.

D.P.

Send all submissions to

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revenue deficit and an added 4.4 percent drop in other program funding --- direct results of the state's fiscal shortfalls. "We must invest in our schools to secure our children's future," said Jayne Pimlott, the Educational Foundation's chief financial officer. "A free public education is something our children can't afford."

The Foundation has targeted several District programs that school officials say would close without the added funding. They are: the District's Robotics Program, through which students from the sixth through 12th grades learn to work as a team and develop their abilities to create and innovate through physics and engineering projects; the K-12 Music Program, which augments the standard curricula with highly collaborative and creative performing arts instruction; the high school's Financial Literacy program, which teaches students strategies for personal and financial growth beyond the school fences;

The Advancement Via Individual Determination --- or, AVID --- initiative, which teaches communication skills and personal responsibility to high school freshmen through seniors within the context of a multi-cultural community; and Link Crew, a mentor-based leadership course for high schoolers. The Foundation has also earmarked funds for the District's K-5 literacy program that provides struggling elementary school read-

ers individual and small group coaching in English language arts, a district-wide high-tech media literacy program, an electronic school enrollment system, a varied array of physical education programs that benefit an estimated 1,200 elementary students, and the District's Bridges to Partnerships initiative that brings professionals from the outside community into classrooms to share their real-life experiences --- with the intent to interest students in math or science careers.

The Foundation, said Chairman Richard Lundquist, "supports programs that help prepare students for effective and productive citizenship and successful careers... Everyone benefits when our children have every possible opportunity to develop their inherent talents, gain new skills and test their abilities in the context of a supportive learning environment." Said Yantz: "We are a small district of five schools and a preschool, but size does not inhibit the unlimited aspirations of those who serve the students in this community." The community-at-large, he added, "is an integral part of the success of our schools."

As the dynamics of the current financial environment pull evermore businesses and organization toward failure, Foundation members want community members to remember every single donation ensures the quality of El Segundo's future. "Your contribution," Pimlott said, "can make a difference." •

open houses

- Saturday, December 12
10:00am-12:00pm
- Saturday, January 9 (2010)
10:00am-12:00pm
- Thursday, January 21 (2010)
6:30-8:00pm

Reservations requested.
Check in begins 15 minutes
prior to program.

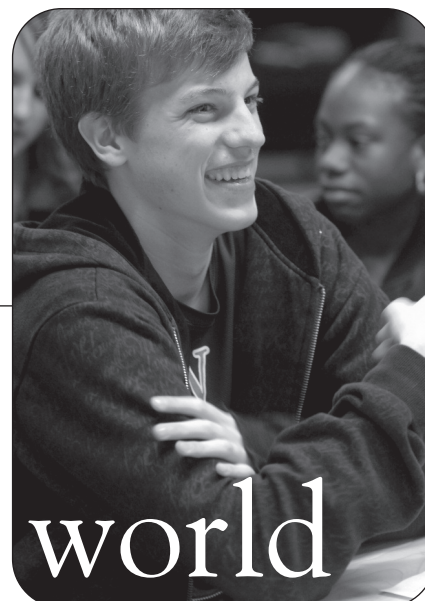
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