

# Daily Pilot

## The Crowd: Dancing for tomorrow's stars, today's needs

By B.W. Cook

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It's almost as long running as the successful ABC television show from which it takes its name.

The eighth annual "Dancing for Tomorrow's Stars," produced by the Assistance League of Newport-Mesa, attracted a sold-out crowd at the City National Grove of Anaheim on March 21. Six high-profile Orange County residents danced their hearts out to raise funds for Assistance League programs.

The crowd paid \$200 per ticket to watch **Cate Heck, Milena Kitic, Lynn Pyle, Mario Rodriquez, Sean Williams** and **Dennis Kuhl**, chairman of Angels Baseball, dance with professional partners.

The gala evening was co-chaired by **Catherine Sloan** and **Judy Weightman**. Sitting in the honorary chairmen's director chairs were **Lisa** and **David Heil**. The amazing dance routines were

judged by **Tina Aldatz**, CEO of Foot Petals, publisher **Christopher Schultz** and **Alfredo Molina**, chairman of Newport jeweler Black, Starr & Frost.

The emcees of the night, **Kristina Dodge** and **Bob Miller**, did a professional job of keeping the evening moving with energy. Dinner was served to the massive crowd sitting on tiered levels of an auditorium for the evening show, which was designed by **Edie Alba** from Century Dancesport and **Michael Anderson** from Logolite Entertainment.

The Assistance League's annual dancing show was sponsored by South Coast Plaza, represented by **Stephanie Howard**, and the Ayres Hotels, represented by family members **Bruce Ayres** and **Don Ayres III**. Also supporting the league were the Bello Family Vineyards and Grand Prix Performance's **Jerry Palanjian**, to mention only a few.

Spotted in the crowd were event committee members including **Patricia Ford**, who decorated the massive ballroom; **Ann Marie Alford**, interim president of the Assistance League of Newport-Mesa; **Wendy Braun**, Assisteens Auxiliary coordinator; **Beth Fleming**, chairman of the La Marisa Auxiliary; **Eileen Shitanishi**, liaison for the Las Reines Auxiliary; and **Penny Weise**, chairman of the Virginia Castle Auxiliary.

**Jill Ayres**, who served as dance coordinator for the evening, commented, "It has been a pleasure to pair the celebrity dancers with their professional dance partners and to watch as their connection has grown. Having danced in the event five years ago, I know how important the trust factor is and how incredible the experience will be for all of them."

Joining Ayres front and center were other dancers from the previous seven seasons. **Janet Curci**, also a major underwriter of the evening, representing her foundation, joined **Brett Lawrence** and his mom, **Jeannie Lawrence**, **Jim** and **Marco McAleer**, **Terry Dubrow**, **Heidi Miller** and **Nora Jorgenson Johnson** in watching the 2015 dancing stars light up the night.

The gala began with a cocktail reception at dusk followed by dinner and the program.

The Assistance League of Newport-Mesa is celebrating its 75th year of service to needy children in the community. Funds raised at the event will benefit the Cheri Herris Children's Dental Health Center, Operation School Bell, Kids on the Block and the Community Outreach Program.

VIP guests in the crowd were **Milan Panic** from MP Biomedicals, **Terry** and **George Schreyer**, **Marie-France** and **W. Channing Lefebvre**, **Judith** and **Willis Longyear**, **Ginger** and **Tony Allen**, **Trish** and **John O'Donnell**, **Jody Burnham**, and **Shannon** and **Byron Tarnutzer**.

The overall fan favorite of the night among the dancers was Kitic, who is also an international opera star. She garnered the most votes and raised the most money for the league. To learn more about the Assistance League of Newport-Mesa, visit <http://www.alnm.org>.

**THE CROWD** runs Fridays. B.W. Cook is editor of the Bay Window, the official publication of the Balboa Bay Club in Newport Beach.