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San Diego Cause for Celebration

CAUSE FOR CELEBRATION: Chula Vista Nature Center

A walk on the wild side for a South Bay environmental treasure

By Cause for Celebration

Posted on Sun, Jun 6th, 2010

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Chef Joe Busalacchi shares a fun moment with County Supervisor Greg Cox.
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Photo by Cause for Celebration

A parade of endearing critters, including Tyto, an inquisitive barn owl and Kruk, an expressive sugar glider, welcomed guests to "Where the Wild Things Are," a culinary celebration benefiting the Chula Vista Nature Center. The idyllic sights, sounds and scents of the [Sweetwater Marsh National Wildlife Refuge](#) provided a picturesque backdrop for the Nature Center's first annual Food and Wine Classic, a carnival of mouthwatering cuisine, palate-pleasing wines and fabulous auction items donated by an eclectic band of business and civic

partners with a heart for preserving one of the South Bay's most precious environmental treasures.

Who Came?

The twilight soiree attracted several hundred smartly-dressed nature lovers, including Dr. and Mrs. Francisco Anguliano, Lisa Cohen (she's executive director of the Chula Vista Chamber of Commerce) Dana Arbogast, Beth Thomsen, Michael and Ginny Mace and Miguel Diaz and Priscilla Martinez of *Better Events Magazine*. Nature Center board member Christopher Lewis and his wife, Jean, joined Betty Kornreich in cheering on fellow board member Ron Cohn, of [Henry's Farmers Market](#), as he co-piloted a cooking demonstration with Celebrity Chef Deborah Scott of the Cohn Restaurant Group. Meanwhile, Chula Vista Mayor Cheryl Cox and her husband, County Supervisor Greg Cox, made a special effort to welcome guests – among them Nature Center board member Steve Williams and Tracey Kinsella, Renee Herrell, Frances Kinney, Adam Westmoreland, Celeste Raso, along with Jeff and Roseman Phelps – to the evening's festivities.

The Cause: For nearly a quarter century, the Chula Vista Nature Center has promoted coastal resource conservation and environmental stewardship through a variety of hands-on educational opportunities. The Nature Center welcomes nearly 70,000 visitors and 400 school field trips annually for up-close encounters with critters that inhabit San Diego County's coastal waterways, among them endangered green sea turtles, shorebirds, hawks, sharks, stingrays, and jellies. In 2001, The Nature Center earned the distinction as the first ever facility to breed one of California's most endangered water birds—the light-footed clapper rail—in captivity. In partnership with SeaWorld and the Wild Animal Park, the Nature Center has raised and released more than 240 clapper rails into Southern California marshes.

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The Good Hearted: The vision and resourcefulness of the Food and Wine Classic Planning Committee breathed life into a celebration buoyed by the participation of Celebrity Chefs Joe Busalacchi and Deborah Scott, and Celebrity Chair Shawn Styles, Meteorologist and Lifestyle Reporter for CBS 8. A team of local businesses, including Allied Waste Services, Dining Out, Henry's Farmers Market, Luce Forward, Jaime Construction, Marine Group Boat Works, Pacifica Companies, San Diego Zoo, and South Bay Fish & Grill headlined a marquee of event sponsors whose generosity and compassion inspired contributions from more than 100 vendors and auction donors. The magic of the evening's festivities so inspired Joe Busalacchi that he offered an impromptu live auction item that raised nearly \$4,000 for the Nature Center: three lucky bidders each won a dinner for 10 people, complete with a bottle of wine for each guest at Via Lago Trattoria, the most recent addition to the Busalacchi family's stable of fine Italian restaurants.

The Creative: Eco-friendly Green with Envy Events tied together the many facets of the celebration with the perfect balance of style and sustainability. Emcee and Auctioneer Charlie Bradley's energy maintained a flow to the evening's entertainment, which featured amazing animal presentations by San Diego Zoo Education Ambassadors and musician Julie Mack's soulful melodies.



Get Involved: San Diegans who care about wildlife and coastal resource protection are invited to donate a few hours of their time each month to the Nature Center. Nature Center volunteers receive a discount on membership, parking privileges on the Refuge, and invitations to special volunteer-only workshops and lectures! Membership packages – offering an array of wonderful benefits – are also available.



Cause for Celebration

About the author: A Cause for Celebration is committed to providing professional and engaging coverage of San Diego's busy social events calendar, while illuminating the businesses, donors and volunteers who bring these occasions to life. Our correspondents have 45 years combined public-relations experience. Ross Porter is a third generation San Diegan who promotes swing music and shares stories of San Diego history through neighborhood walking tours. Sign Molly Bowman-Styles up for any cause that promotes environmental or animal protection. Her passion is creating a better world. For Lizbeth Persons Price, arts and culture are the essence of life, combining with education to build a strong community.

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Jim Biddle Jun 6

The Chula Vista Nature Center was a GREAT event to kick-off a new non-profit organization and make the Nature Center another magic place to be in San Diego County.

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