

# Society Scene

by

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## TROPICAL EXTRAVAGANZA RAISES OVER \$100K FOR EASTERSEALS SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

*Photos by Vanessa Nealon-Roberts and Sabrina O'Brien*

Easterseals of Southern California hosted a night to remember with its spectacular "An Evening for Autism," set against the backdrop of a lavish Newport Beach estate owned by Barry Saywitz of Saywitz Properties. The event brought a lively tropical theme to the autumn night, raising over \$100,000 for autism awareness and services. It was an evening brimming with festivities, community spirit, and generosity that made a difference.

Over 400 attendees gathered under a large, heated, and beautifully lit big top set on the tennis court. Eight bars were strategically positioned throughout the space, ensuring guests were always within an expertly crafted cocktail or a glass of fine wine. Laderach Chocolatier Suisse offered sweet treats that paired perfectly with the featured beverages from Moraga Bel Air Vineyards, Warson Wines, Insolito Tequila, and Garrison Brothers Bourbon. The catering line-up was equally impressive, with Newport Rib Company, Gulliver's, Maggiano's Little Italy, and Eddie V's all serving delicious dishes that kept the crowd energized for a night of celebration.

The entertainment added a special touch to the evening. Three live bands provided the soundtrack, while fire dancers, hula dancers, circus jugglers, and stilt walkers dazzled guests and created an atmosphere reminiscent of a tropical paradise. The joyful, colorful performances kept the party mood at its peak and lent a festive flair that everyone enjoyed.

The evening celebrated the community and the strength and resilience of families affected by autism. Barry Saywitz, the gracious host of the event, expressed his satisfaction, saying, "I am so pleased with the results of the event. We had a huge turnout, bigger than expected, and a great response from the community and our sponsors. It was a tropical extravaganza that I think people will soon not forget, and all for a great cause. The proceeds will be well spent on much-needed services and technology development to benefit those who deal with autism."

Barry was joined by a host of notable attendees, including Nancy Weintraub, Chief Development Officer for Easterseals Southern California, and a number of key public figures. Scott Baugh, former California State Representative; Nick Dunlap, Mayor of Fullerton; Jane Heft, Councilwoman of Laguna Beach; and Noah Blom, Councilman of Newport Beach, all showed their support. Assembly Members Diane Dixon and Laurie Davis also lent their presence alongside Sue Ann Pien, the 2023 Spirit Award-nominated actress, and other community leaders, including Miss Fountain Valley and Miss Placentia.

With a mix of politicians, community leaders, and real estate heavyweights, the event became an extraordinary testament to what happens when a community comes together for a worthy cause. The evening underscored the power of collaboration, particularly when addressing issues that impact so many families in Southern California.

Silent and live auctions were another highlight of the night, helping to raise over \$100,000, a significant boost from the originally anticipated \$60,000. The funds raised will go towards Easterseals' ongoing efforts to expand their autism services, develop cutting-edge technology, and provide crucial support to those affected by autism and their families.

With major corporate sponsors such as Pacific Premier Bank, Siglers and Carrier Air Conditioning, and other contributors including National Energy Installers, Vision Roofing, Bank of California, Morgan Stanley Private Wealth Group, and The Saywitz Company, the level of corporate backing further demonstrated the strong community commitment to making a difference.

It was a night of celebration, empathy, and generosity that will undoubtedly leave a lasting impression on those who attended. The atmosphere was vibrant and filled with hope as everyone came together to support a cause that touched so many lives.

From fire dancing to gourmet food and heartfelt speeches, every moment of the evening was designed to bring joy and spread awareness, and it certainly succeeded in doing just that. Barry Saywitz and Easterseals Southern California set the standard for future fundraising events, showing they can make a meaningful impact when a community gets involved. For more information, please visit [www.easterseals.com](http://www.easterseals.com).



Easterseals Southern California CEO Mark Whitley, actor Sue Ann Pien, Chief Advancement Officer Nancy Weintraub, and Sue Ann Pien's Mom



Part of the entertainment featured impersonators of "Taylor Swift," "Frank Sinatra," and "Snoop Dogg"



Barry Saywitz with Sue Ann Pien, Actress along with her mother



Paula Pompa, Scott Baugh, and Nancy Weintraub



Barry Saywitz with Miss Fountain Valley and Miss Placentia