

Friday Sep 29

## Praises sung for 'The Key to You' benefit

By Janet Duca Norton

A pair of Grammy Award-winning entertainers headlined "The Key to You" benefit concert for the Pacific Autism Center for Education. Atherton Mayor Charles Marsala opened his garden for the Sept. 10 evening event, which was presented by Heart of Silicon Valley, a fundraising group of young professionals.

Marcia Goldman, education director for PACE, said one in 166 children exhibits behaviors on the autistic spectrum. Peter Finch, KFOG morning anchor and news director, gave a moving personal account of his 17-year-old son's life with autism. The benefit raised \$40,000 for PACE programs.

Co-chairs Maria Hermanussen and Roberta Economidis and their committee presented a festive evening featuring great music, good food, and auctions with emcees Marsala and Emmy Award-winning news anchor Terilyn Joe. Finch was an enthusiastic auctioneer and had fun with the bids for a dinner with the emcees at Mantra Restaurant and Lounge in Palo Alto, one of the event sponsors.

Composer and pianist David Benoit and singer David Pack, who have been friends since college, collaborated on the signature song "The Key to You." Their performances were a mix of new and old favorites, adding an impromptu invitation for Jim Pollack to join in with his banjo on Benoit's "Watermelon Man."

There were two surprise performers: Deborah Lavoy, the creative inspiration for Heart of Silicon Valley, premiered her new song "Weightless" with co-writer Pollock and composer Michael Silversher performed his Sept. 11-inspired song "A Simple Prayer."

Among those offering the performers a standing ovation were several movers and shakers from the Peninsula and San Francisco, including Ana Allioto, Kati Miller, Valerie Burneice, Geoff and Carla Davis, and Brenda and Greg Munks.



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Maria Hermanussen, Atherton Mayor Charles Marsala and Roberta Economidis at 'The Key to You' Pacific Autism Center for Education benefit.