

SATURDAY
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Daily Breeze

PTN honors those who aid children

By Meredith Grenier

DAILY BREEZE

Pediatric Therapy Network's inaugural Circle of Love — Circle of Life Awards Luncheon on Thursday honored six community leaders. And the event had it all — kudos, humor, pathos and lots of love.

It also had elegance, set in the beautiful corporate headquarters of Sunrider International, surrounded by sculpture, art and antiques.

Sunrider owners Drs. Tei Fu Chen and Oi-Lin Chen hosted the event, welcoming about 300 guests to the luncheon catered by The Loft Hawaiian Restaurants.

"We share a strong interest in the children of our community along with PTN," said Tei Fu Chen in his welcoming remarks.

PTN is a USC-affiliated non-profit children's therapy center based in Torrance that provides occupational, physical and speech and language therapy to more than 1,200 children weekly.

Of course, children were part of the program, emceed by PTN board member Teri Nelson Carpenter. The pledge of allegiance was led by student Rachel Handlin; and Carpenter's daughter, Stephanie Carpenter, opened the program with an inspirational song.

Next, PTN students modeled special-occasion dresses designed by Isabel Garretton.

A newly completed video gave insight into PTN's work helping children with special needs since

1996. On the video, one parent gave a testimonial about her son who neurologists predicted would "never walk, talk or do anything." Today, the boy not only is able to run, but he operates an ice cream stand at PTN.

In addition to acknowledging Sunrider, PTN board president Shauna Valenzuela thanked major sponsors including Mattel, SBC Communications, Inc., the *Daily Breeze*, Toyota Motor Sales, USA, The Red Onion Restaurant and American Honda.

Finally, the Circle of Love — Circle of Life honorees were introduced.

Sheri Schrier, founder of Happy Hats for Kids, was introduced by Jessica Swinson. Schrier lost her mother, father, grandmother and younger brother to cancer. While visiting relatives in the hospital she realized that sick children needed something to take their minds off of the everyday hospital routine. Since she began the non-profit in 1991, more than 500,000 such children have received Happy Hats and Hero Club gift packages.

In thanking PTN, Schrier reflected: "Who would ever think this challenge would touch so many hearts."

The second recipient, Lori Moilov, was nominated by the office of Sen. Debra Bowen, D-Redondo Beach. At 16, Moilov found her passion in business and created Kidz Biz, a workshop introducing foster youth to business. She thanked her

many sponsors and her parents for being such a supportive part of her life.

The third recipient was Barbara Saltzman, founder of The Jester and Pharly Phund which provides educational experiences that give children hope, laughter and the experience of caring for each other. In thanking PTN, Saltzman evoked the spirit of her son, David, who died of Hodgkin's disease in 1990, just before his 23rd birthday. The Yale student had just written the children's book *The Jester Has Lost His Jingle*.

"Most of all I have David to thank because it is his vision that touches us all so very, very deeply," she said.

The next recipient was Marj Gwinn, educational services manager of the *Daily Breeze*. She was introduced by publisher Art Wible, who saluted the high level of talent, energy and commitment on the part of the day's recipients.

"There is a lot of hope in the South Bay because of people you have just honored and also because there is a Marj Gwinn, who is helping people learn, grow and extending her helping hand."

Wible pointed out that more than 2 million copies of the *Daily*

Breeze have been supplied to 200 schools, used by more than 1,000 teachers in the South Bay.

In thanking PTN, Gwinn said: "What can I say when I have a great job in which I can make a difference every day?"

John Jaacks was honored for his 40 years of work with the Boy Scouts. After joining Sunset Rotary Club in 1994, he started a Cub Scout pack made up of boys who grew up in gangs and in the projects. Today these boys have learned sportsmanship, good manners and respect.

In accepting, Jaacks said, "What I represent is probably what a gazillion other people do without any reward."

The final recipient was Dave Crespino of the Torrance Police Department. Crespino operates the Teens and Police program, which provides students with an inside look into the job of a police officer. He was introduced by Lt. Brad Wilson.

"He has strengthened the relationship between students and the police," Wilson said of Crespino. "Dave's professionalism and ability to reach out to children is what makes him such an outstanding recipient of this award."