

Peninsula Family Service celebrates 60th anniversary

By Janet Duca Norton

'We outgrew our name,' said Laurie Wishard, a keynote speaker and president of the Peninsula Family Service, formerly Family Service of San Mateo County, at the organization's 60th Anniversary and Winners Celebration.

After explaining that programs and clients expanded the organization beyond San Mateo County, keynote speaker and board Chairman Todd Foster introduced the new name, Peninsula Family Service, and displayed the new logo at the gala celebration.

Co-chairwomen Pandy Garvic and Denise Lundquist welcomed 300 guests to the milestone gala on Sept. 16 at the Crowne Plaza Cabana Hotel in Palo Alto that raised \$150,000 for service programs. The event incorporated the 15th annual winners breakfast awards, which honored four clients for their life-changing experiences in specific programs.

The inspirational evening of looking back and looking to the future was a living testimony to the organization's informal motto "giving a hand up, not a hand out" to people in need. Honorary board member Ruth Wisnom said, "It (Peninsula Family Service) transforms lives; it's a hand up that empowers children, families and older adults."

Founded in 1950, the nonprofit had one program and served 164 cases in its first year; currently, 31 programs help 20,000 children, families and older adults.

"We get our yearly dose of inspiration" at the gala, said emcee Sydnie Kohara of CBS-5 TV said. She and Don Sanchez of ABC-7 TV took turns introducing the four honorees.

A surprise followed Kohara's introduction of Melvina Lewis and her success at the Fair Oaks Intergenerational Center. Kohara mentioned that gospel singing is Lewis' hobby. Lewis received a standing ovation after she spontaneously sang Billie Holliday's "God Bless the Child."

Tommy Mostek changed both his life and his family's after he was accepted into the Ways to Work Loan Program. Julie Rorabough and her daughters created a new life after attending Haven Child Development Center. Roy Blacet and Heather Shaw found a support system at the Visitation Center.

Michael Osbourne, president and creative director of Michael Osborne Design Inc., received special recognition for his years of generous support of Family Service through his non-profit design organization, Joey's Corner. He has designed everything from the heart logo to a mural wall in the new center. He donated a special sculpture "Within Your Heart" for the silent auction. Auxiliary member Patti and Rusty Rueff made the winning bid on the sleek, brushed-aluminum, interlocking hearts sculpture.

Guest speaker Tracy Eiler not only is a fundraiser for the Visitation Center, she has been a client. She described her attendance at the center as "a healing experience." After her remarks, guests donated more than \$60,000 to the fund-a-need auction item for this center.

The special Heart in Hand Award was given to comedian Michael Pritchard for his 15 years of guest speaker appearances at the winners awards breakfasts.

Applauding the winners were Ruth Wisnom, founder of first auxiliary and lifetime board member; Patricia Foster; Dominic and Julie Trinigale; Audrey and Roland Lampert; Winnie and George Biocini, Margaret Ann Niven; Sandy Littlefield and Carol Whitfield.

Located in San Mateo, Peninsula Family Services provides innovative programs and services to children, families and older adults with their child development and education; supervised family visitation/exchange; older worker employment and training; support services for low-income older adults; and family loans.