

*Society Scene*  
by  
**Kelly Bennett**

Exclusively for the Newport News



## LITERACY PROJECT LUNCHEON FUNDRAISER FOR STUDENTS

The scenic panoramic view from the grand ballroom of Big Canyon Country Club was the perfect setting for the Literacy Project Foundation (LPF) to discuss future dreams and their vision of success for young at-risk kids. The second annual luncheon was highly successful in making new friends with over 100 guests while raising some \$20,000 to serve classrooms and after-school programs in Southern California school districts with their literacy program, Get Set Read!.

Guests arrived at the elegant ballroom entrance to meet five young students from Project Hope School, which offers a unique educational setting and outreach to homeless students. The event theme was to have each child represented by an adult in the role they dream to become in their career. Kids greeted each guest, introduced their role model and explained their "Dream Card," a large poster illustration of their future job. The reception line led to the ballroom where teachers demonstrated the Get Set literacy products so guests could understand how the products work and their importance in teaching kids to read.

Lunch was believed to be one of the finest ever served in the Big Canyon ballroom for a special event, thanks to committee member Jeannie Lawrence who orchestrated the three course indulgence. Guests delighted in a chilled melon soup topped with crème fraiche and the highlight was the pan roasted Chilean Sea Bass in lemon butter sauce served with vegetable risotto and grilled asparagus. It was literally mouth watering, but that wasn't all, heads turned when an enormous slice of rich carrot cake was presented to each guest...and it was delicious.

The event program began with dramatic illiteracy statistics from LPF Board Chairman Doug Freeman illustrating the great need for kids to master reading skills at a young age. Keynote speaker and former National Teacher of the Year, Chauncey Veatch delivered a passionate speech about his teaching journey and reminded guests that students of hardship circumstances especially, cannot be left behind. "Most of my students come from families of modest economic means, but their parents have the same dreams for them as parents everywhere," said Veatch. "To dream is to be filled with hope. I know this because I see the faces of hope daily."

The objective of the "What Dreams Are Made Of" event was to raise awareness of LPF's mission to provide their literacy products to classrooms and after-school environments so students with reading scores below grade level can improve their English skills. Newly appointed President/CEO Sue Tucker announced, "We are very proud to be recording an average of a 54% increase in reading skill levels with students that complete our program!" Funds directly enable LPF to provide Get Set Read! and the teaching staff to administer the program at no cost. Guests made donations per child and per school and \$20,000-plus will serve over 200 students with the reading program. The foundation also celebrated the largest grant to date from Hoag Hospital Foundation totaling \$139,000.00 to service various schools in the fall of 2010.

Another major highlight of the afternoon was having the five Project Hope students and their role models take center stage. Equipped with their "Dream Cards," students bravely dazzled the crowd with their confidence and aspiring dreams. Role Models helped by telling their own stories of how they selected their careers and became accomplished. Dr. Bill Manclark represented a veterinarian for Salice; CEO Lee Ann Canaday represented a CEO for Jordan; Dana Freeman represented a violist and music teacher for Jennifer; Deputy Dee Dee Kurimay represented a sheriff for Danielle; and Dr. Deba Bhattacharyya represented a paleontologist for Brandon. The



Former California Senator & California State Secretary for Education Marian Bergeson and Liz Merage



Bill Manclark with Salice, Lee Ann Canaday with Jordan



Marshall Kaplan, Jeannie Lawrence, Bob Latimer



Catherine Emmi, Mary Frome, Lynn Freeman

children's emotions and excitement to be a part of this special day filled the room leaving no doubt of the purpose of event.

The event's success was made possible by major sponsors Douglas and Lynn Freeman, Ernest and Irma Rose Foundation, Sue and Stephen L. Tucker, Mary and Walter Frome Family Foundation, Liz Merage, Catherine and James Emmi, Mabel and David Wheeler, former California State Senator and Secretary of Education Marian Bergeson, Jeannie Lawrence, Bob Latimer, Marc Levine, JoAnn and Anthony Fanticola, and Virginia Mangione among others.

The Literacy Project Foundation's mission is to bring the gift of literacy to children as a foundational learning element to help achieve their personal dreams. Visit [www.literacyprojectfoundation.org](http://www.literacyprojectfoundation.org).

Photos by: Ann Chatillon