OH, STARRY NIGHT!

Vanessa Williams and her back up band

John and Anne Marion

Aubrey and Lori Serfling, Paul White, Patty and Arthur Newman

Bill and Evelyn Hall with Joy and Harry Goldstein

Eisenhower Gala a Huge Success by J. Tracy Hermann It was a magical night, with a crystal-clear sky overhead and the aromas of a springtime desert wafting on air — a night that not only "reached for the stars"…it lovingly embraced them.

On March 22, Eisenhower Medical Center's 35th Anniversary Gala Reaching for the Stars presented a stellar evening of non-stop entertainment, dinner, dancing and celebration that not only showcased the musical styling of Grammy Award-winning artist and screen star Vanessa Williams, it heralded a new era of unbridled community support and generosity. The evening also paid homage to the hard work and dedication of all those who have made the last 35 years of Eisenhower Medical Center's dedicated service to the community possible.

"Tonight is certainly very special," G. Aubrey Serfling, President and Chief Executive Officer, Eisenhower Medical Center, proudly announced in his introductory remarks to the crowd of 800 at the Desert Springs J.W. Marriott Resort and Spa. "It marks the first time since we began Campaign Eisenhower that so many supporters have gathered together under one roof for the same reason: to show support for this wonderful medical center."

Launched in 2002, the $150 million capital fund drive known as Campaign Eisenhower was initially fostered to help finance the medical center's next five years of capital growth. Since that time, the venture has helped Eisenhower Medical Center to reach even greater pinnacles of care, including a host of new technologies and more advanced Centers of Excellence, propelling Eisenhower Medical Center to national 100 Top Hospital® status.

Earlier, on March 21, Eisenhower executives made yet another stellar announcement — the news that Campaign Eisenhower has actually exceeded its initial goal of $150 million, reaching the unprecedented fundraising benchmark of $200 million, all a full year ahead of its initial schedule. These funds will allow Eisenhower to continue its capital expansion, including the construction of a new state-of-the-art 168-bed inpatient wing respectfully named The Annenberg Pavilion, as well as projects like the 24-suite Stacey and Greg Renker Pavilion and the expanded Tennity Emergency Department, all of which will provide an even greater level of service to the growing community.

Nevertheless, as Eisenhower Medical Center Chairman of the Board Harry M. Goldstein announced to the gala attendees, the work of community service is never quite finished.

"Tonight we celebrate reaching our $200 million milestone of the first phase of Campaign Eisenhower and the hard work of our Foundation staff," he said. "Like all great medical centers, we need to continue to raise money — to allow Eisenhower to reach new milestones. There are many worthy organizations that vie for philanthropy. None are more essential to our Valley's basic quality of life than Eisenhower Medical Center, and we are deeply grateful for your generous support. Here's to the next 35 years!"

Beyond the recognition and celebration of a campaign's job well done, the evening also featured another first, the inaugural presentation of the Eisenhower Medical Center Spirit of Giving award, which was designed to selectively honor individuals whose commitment to Eisenhower has had a profound impact on the fulfillment of the Center's founding vision. In its first bestowal, the award recognized a woman whose "dedication, contagious enthusiasm, motivational support and unfailing generosity," said Goldstein, "has helped lead Eisenhower Medical Center to its highest level ever" — Leonore Annenberg, wife of the late Honorable Walter H. Annenberg.

“Our intent is to express appreciation — in this unforgettable manner — to our honoree for all that she and her beloved husband have meant to Eisenhower Medical Center, and especially for all that she has done over the past five years to inspire, encourage, and support our Board, our Administration, and all our personnel in our quest toward an ever greater level of excellence in health care,” Mr. Goldstein told the gathering. “And, on a personal note, I cannot overstate what this magnificent woman has meant to me in my role as Chairman.”

Although Mrs. Annenberg was recovering from an illness and unable to attend the event, she submitted a letter expressing her thanks to former United States Secretary of State George P. Shultz and his wife, Charlotte, for attending on her behalf, and further relaying her personal gratitude for the award:

“I would like to pay tribute to my late husband Walter. It was through our partnership of over 50 years that I have been privileged to continue support for Eisenhower Medical Center. We are so very fortunate to have such an outstanding Medical Center right here in our Valley, and I am proud to have played a role in furthering its development.”

Sharing center stage with Campaign Eisenhower and the Spirit of Giving Award was the gala itself, a sensational evening that included world-renowned entertainers, a charity auction, a spectacular dinner and indoor fireworks. Co-chaired by Joy Goldstein and Evelyn Hall, the evening featured television icon and former Entertainment Tonight host Leeza Gibbons as emcee. Songstress Vanessa Williams electrified the audience with her timeless good looks and a performance that included such hits as "Running Back to You” and “Save the Best for Last.”

And as a perfect ending to a perfect evening — there was music to dance to in the Desert Ballroom under the soft light that emulated a star-studded sky.

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