

SANTA BARBARA NEWS-PRESS

Elegant fete marks Heal the Ocean's 10th year

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About 350 members and supporters of Heal the Ocean were on hand for an evening of fine dining and fine music -- some of it supplied by local musician Jack Johnson -- as the environmental organization marked its 10th anniversary with a benefit dinner at the Montecito Valley Ranch.



In addition to honoring several individuals who have played key roles in helping Heal the Ocean pursue its mission of protecting the area's ocean waters, the Thursday night event served as a celebration of sorts for what the group is calling its successful 10-year campaign to convert Rincon area homes straddling the Santa Barbara-Ventura county line from septic systems to a Carpinteria Sanitary District sewer line.

Both sides in the contentious battle over the septic systems of homes at Rincon, Sandyland, Sand Point and Padaro Lane agreed in late July to set aside their differences and let the conversion project, for which some state funding has been secured, go forward.

Heal the Ocean has maintained that the septic systems have caused effluent to flow into the ocean, creating health and environmental hazards. Opponents had cast doubt on those claims while also complaining about the price tag of the conversions.



Actress Julia Louis-Dreyfus, a member of Heal the Ocean, served as honorary chair of the event.

She elicited laughs from the crowd when she jokingly paraphrased Abraham Lincoln: "Do not let the enemy beguile you. . .into thinking septic systems near the beach are a good idea."

"I so look forward to this Heal the Ocean party every year," she said earlier in her remarks, adding that friends and neighbors can disagree about a lot of things, but all can agree on the need to care for the ocean -- and that Jack Johnson is awesome.

Indeed, Mr. Johnson's performance on acoustic guitar, accompanied on keyboards by Zach Gill, got the festivities rolling and had many in the audience singing along.

He was introduced by Heal the Ocean Executive Director Hillary Hauser, whose family has known Mr. Johnson's for decades.

Before launching into a version of the tune "Gone Going Gone," Mr. Johnson said he has been inspired by things he learned "from my Auntie Hillary," terms of endearment for Ms. Hauser, who said she has known Mr. Johnson since he was 12.



Honored at the event were Jean-Michael Cousteau, who gave Heal the Ocean his 501(c)3 nonprofit status when the organization was formed; Mark Gold, executive director of Heal the Bay, Santa Monica; Heal the Ocean co-founder Jeff Young; and Fred Woocher, the Santa Monica elections lawyer who won and settled the Rincon

sewer project lawsuit. Mr. Woocher was presented with a certificate from the Santa Barbara and Ventura county boards of supervisors by Santa Barbara County 1st District Supervisor Salud Carbajal. In the audience, meanwhile was 2nd District Supervisor Janet Wolf, state senate candidate Hannah-Beth Jackson and 3rd District supervisor candidate Doreen Farr.

Also singled out for praise was Craig Murray, general manager of the Carpinteria Sanitary District, who was in the audience.

"When I see the support and all of us together doing it, it fills my heart, my soul," Ms. Hauser told the News-Press after the honors were handed out. A Hawaiian lei was hung around the neck of each honoree by Ms. Louis-Dreyfus, prompting Ms. Hauser to quip, "Everybody gets 'leied' by Julia."

Later, however, Ms. Hauser struck a more serious note, one of appreciation.

"A lot of people say, 'Heal the ocean,' (but) if it weren't for these people who supported us from the beginning, I couldn't do anything. How do you get a Fred Woocher to win a case for you if you can't pay for him?"

Everyone here (are) the most generous supporters any organization could ever hope for."



The evening also included a silent auction and a raffle of donated items that included, among many others, a beach cruiser, a stand-up paddle board, a Russian Bear premium vodka package, dinner for four prepared by a personal chef, a gift certificate at Brophy Bros., a stay in a king suite at the Harbor House Inn and a Camille Day Spa package. Also up for grabs were a donated cruise; five nights at a resort in Mexico; a Larry Iwerks painting, "Leadbetter Point;" a San Francisco deluxe getaway and a Ty Warner package that included a stay at the Coral Casino for its grand reopening next month.

A film short by Morgan Maasen was shown and the night ended with a performance by Paula Fuga and the Culver City Dub Collective.

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