

Schools of Africa Masquerade Ball Benefit: Education Changes Everything!

Mary Hida
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On Thursday evening, November 19, from 6 to 9 pm, Women's Federation for World Peace (WFWP) in conjunction with Women in Music and Arts (WIMA), hosted a fundraiser for the Schools of Africa Project at The Old School Brewing Company in Las Vegas, Nevada. Over 70 people from diverse cultures and backgrounds, dressed in colorful costumes, attended the International Masquerade Ball. Delicious Italian cuisine, artfully prepared by Chef Michael Leonetti, was served buffet style, as the guests arrived. The Dick Kastel Jazz Combo performed throughout the night. You can watch the video above.



Emcee, Ms. Sandy Kastel, founder of WIMA and lead singer, opened the program with the National Anthem. She then invited The Nondi Montanara Multi-Cultural Performing Arts Company, consisting of 4 dancers and 2 drummers, to perform a dynamic African dance. The powerful drumming brought

everyone's attention and the spirit of Africa into the room. The spirit escalated even more when the dance company invited the audience to participate.



Mrs. Kimiyo Anceney, Las Vegas WFWP Chairwoman and Mrs. Mary Hida showed a video and shared about the eight WFWP schools in seven African countries: Mozambique, Rwanda, Uganda, Kenya, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia and Guinea-Bissau. Guest speaker, Ms. Monica Lenoir, spoke to the crowd on how "Education Changes Lives." She captured the audience's attention, as she spoke about appreciating what we have. Later Christine Moon introduced Mr. Mahamed Youssouf, a political refugee from Ethiopia, who owns a local dry cleaner that she has been patronizing for the past three years. When he heard that one of the schools is in Ethiopia, he was inspired and determined to continue to help us. He brought his wife and spoke passionately about how war and starvation can affect a whole generation; and that without education that is all the children will know.

Later Ms. Ami Bayani, Miss Asian Las Vegas 2015, greeted everyone. Throughout the evening, people bid on silent auction items. Raffle winners announced, in between the performances of talented singers. Finally came the parade of costumes, where the winners were chosen. Special thanks to Ms. Sandy Kastel, who, prior to the event, had invited us to be on her radio show to promote the event; as well as to Mr. Nick Utiger and Mr. Bud Kourick, who generously donated the venue; and, finally, to Chef Michael Leonetti for his gourmet cuisine. We are also grateful to Mrs. Hope Igarashi and her friends for donating the raffle baskets and to the UNLV Shining City Project volunteers for supporting the event.

Everyone enjoyed the evening and participated with spontaneous dancing, singing, and fun. The program was concluded by singing "Let There Be Peace on Earth," as we stood in a circle.

