

A History of Giving

Local powerhouse organization supports countless charities

PHOTO BY MICHAEL SPENGLER/MI STUDIOS



Joe and Michelle Wiseman with Nicole and Leandro Velazquez

The group engages in numerous fundraising activities throughout the year, but none is more significant than its annual Jewel Ball, which is held every year at the La Jolla Beach & Tennis Club. This year's event, themed "Wonderland," is an *Alice in Wonderland* fantasy evening planned for August 3. A noted society event, it is expected to draw 800 guests and, even three months before its presentation, has already committed funding for ten major beneficiaries — those requesting grants above \$20,000 — totaling more than \$420,000 from its net proceeds. It is estimated that an additional

FOR NEARLY THREE QUARTERS of a century, the ladies of La Jolla's Las Patronas philanthropic organization have been working tirelessly to support San Diego-area charities, generating a mind-boggling \$21 million for more than 1,000 nonprofits since its creation. Its 14 founding members established the organization based on a mission to support charities in the areas of health, education, social services, and cultural arts.

The significance of Las Patronas' contribution isn't lost on its current president, Michelle Wiseman. A six-year member who's held numerous posts within the organization throughout her tenure, Wiseman recalls what first drew her to join. "My 'aha moment' came when I opened the paper and saw a picture of Elaine Murphy, chair of Jewel Ball 2012, riding a Vespa to announce her Jewel Ball theme," she says. "I remember thinking, 'I want to be a part of *that* fun!' As I learned more about the Las Patronas mission and tradition of service to enhance the quality of life in our community, I was drawn to the unique opportunity to make a difference while working with 50 amazing women dedicated to the same purpose."

40 to 50 minor beneficiaries will also benefit from the event. Jewel Ball 2019 chair Nicole Velasquez shares her perspective on this significant expectation, saying, "Proceeds from Jewel Ball 2018 funded 41 minor beneficiaries totaling more than \$500,000 and 11 major beneficiaries totaling more than \$340,000. So, you can see, we have our work cut out for us!"

How they distribute this substantial amount is an all-hands endeavor. "We accomplish this through a rigorous grants process that includes a thorough evaluation of each organization applying for funding, including a review of its mission, operations, and capital needs," explains Wiseman. "Our entire membership reviews each grant request to prioritize funding and ensure our support has the greatest impact to the citizens of San Diego. We take very seriously our responsibility to be great stewards of each contribution we receive."

The diversity of its members only empowers the group in its shared mission. "Despite our different backgrounds, ideas, and talents, our members come together as a unified voice to bring positive change. It's a special experience that I love!" enthuses Wiseman. laspatronas.org DEANNA MURPHY