

Daily Pilot



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Column Circle of Life fundraiser helps New Directions for Women



New Directions for Women CEO Rebecca Flood (left) with donors Lyn Wilder and Allison Wilder. (Jessica DiBella Photography)

By **B.W. Cook**

APRIL 24, 2017, 5:10 PM

The ninth annual Circle of Life breakfast captured the hearts and minds of dedicated locals determined to rescue women and their children in desperate need of treatment for alcohol and drug dependency.

The organization known as New Directions for Women, (NDFW) is led by the passionate **Rebecca Flood**, longtime CEO and executive director.

Some 300 donors converged in the dining room of the posh Newport Beach Country Club, raising an impressive \$350,000 in support of New Directions' services.

NDFW foundation board member and major sponsor **Carole Pickup** welcomed guests sharing the significant role assumed by family members and friends of women fighting substance abuse. Her passion, like so many others in attendance, is born from personal experience.

“The struggle is real, the road to recovery is long, but if we work together and stick together, change for the better can occur,” said Pickup, a woman of strong faith, who shared that God has a hand in the recovery and transformation of those fighting the addiction.

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Joining Pickup were donors **Allison Wilder**, daughter of **Pamela Wilder** who is one of the organization’s founders, board member **Judy Elmore**, journalist and blogger **Greer Wylder**, and film director **Dan Carracino**, who is known for “Bill W,” a documentary about the co-founder of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Also attending the breakfast confab were **Judy** and **Ray Brandt**, **Poppy Carmelo**, **Alex Chazen**, **Amir Kahana**, **Avi Attal**, **Jason Feld**, **Ann Dennis**, **Anne Huffman**, **Mary Anna Jeppe**, **Jerry Johnson**, **Devon** and **Kevin Martin**, **Joe Moody**, **Dick Pickup**, **Todd** and **Natalie Pickup** and **Anne** and **John Wortmann**.

New Directions has been assisting addicts in Orange County for some 40 years. Their recovery programs began in 1977 and the NDFW sober living home is one of two accredited facilities in the entire county.

Thousands of O.C. citizens yearly seek hospitalization for alcohol and drug overdoses and related death tolls reach unacceptable numbers in county statistics.

NDFW offers private and confidential treatment for women of all ages including pregnant women, women with children, and many women dealing with other circumstances and medical situations.

Flood was once an addict and remains open about her journey. Her story is well-known to fellow supporters.

“My philosophy is to heal women then heal generations,” Flood said. - “If I had been denied the help and treatment I needed when I was struggling with addiction, the cycle would have continued in my life and with my family.”

To learn more about New Directions for Women, visit newdirectionsforwomen.org.

Friendship Matters

Thirty years ago, **Bruno Serato** landed in the USA as an immigrant from Verona, Italy.

Circumstance would introduce the young Serato — who began his first job in America as a busboy at La Vie en Rose in Brea — to another immigrant, **Garth Blumenthal**, a South African ex-patriot who had come to the U.S. seeking business opportunities. His passion was the U.S. car market.

Over time, both men would succeed and as their fortunes rewarded their ambition and hard work, their personal friendship would also grow.

Serato would become the owner of the Anaheim White House restaurant and Blumenthal would rise to the position of general manager of the world's No. 1 Mercedes-Benz dealership, Fletcher Jones Motorcars.

Beyond his success as a celebrity restaurateur, Serato gained national attention for his local philanthropy.

For years, Serato feed some 2,200 needy local children every day from his White House kitchen.

Then, earlier this year, tragedy struck and a fire decimated the Anaheim landmark, putting Serato out of business.

Enter Blumenthal, one of many supporters of Serato's mission to feed the kids, and a fundraiser was created.

On April 20, Blumenthal opened the massive doors of Fletcher Jones Motorcars for a reception billed as, "That's What Friends Are For."

The \$100 per person ticket sold out and the crowd bid generously on auction items. Ultimately, 130 attendees raised \$47,000.

It was all about friends in the community helping one another out — just the sort of activity that makes O.C. great on every level.

To learn more, or to donate, go to fjmercedes.com/thatswhatfriendsarefor/.

B.W. COOK is editor of the Bay Window, the official publication of the Balboa Bay Club in Newport Beach.