

Down the Rabbit Hole

Las Patronas Jewel Ball

Story and photos by Vincent Andrunas Special to the U-T



Michael and Cathy Maywood (she's Jewel Ball co-chair), Robert and Shay Stephens (she's Jewel Ball co-chair), Leandro and Nicole Velazquez (she's Jewel Ball chair), Michelle and Joe Wiseman (she's LP president)

At a picnic along the Thames in 1862, Charles Lutwidge Dodgson (better known by the pseudonym Lewis Carroll) began telling a story to entertain young Lorina, Edith, and Alice — the three daughters of his friend, an Oxford dean. He later wrote in his diary, “[I]n a desperate attempt to strike out some new line of fairy-lore, I had sent my heroine straight down a rabbit-hole, to begin with, without the least idea what was to happen afterwards.” The story eventually became “Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland,” one of the most popular children’s books of all time (and a barely-concealed critique of Victorian society).

It was also a perfect choice for the theme for the 73rd Jewel Ball, “Wonderland,” presented last Saturday by the Las Patronas, that group of about 50 prominent and extremely hard-working ladies that has raised \$21 million for more than 1,000 San Diego charitable institutions since its 1946 beginnings. Nicole Velazquez chaired, Cathy Maywood and Shay Stephens co-chaired, and the black-tie event drew nearly 700 guests to the La Jolla Beach & Tennis Club (which donates use of the venue annually).

The “Wonderland” theme was perfect for an event perennially noted for lavish décor (which LP members toil all year to create); the whimsical ambiance (by design co-chairs Megan Cox and Michelle Parker) was one of the most stunning in Jewel Ball memory. Guests received little golden keys allowing entry “down the rabbit hole” — a passage lined with playing cards, clocks, and looking glasses, leading to a courtyard filled with fanciful flowers, mushrooms, and butterflies. They enjoyed “Queen of Hearts” cosmos, tray-passed hors d’oeuvres, and upbeat music while perusing silent auction tables. Stations proffered chilled shrimp, crab, and ceviche; grilled lamb lollipops, sushi, Kobe sliders, and more.

Wayne Foster Entertainment’s Jacqueline Foster SHOWDANCE

performed on a giant multi-level stage structure, drawing guests into the spectacular Mad Hatter Ballroom. There, dinner by BTS Catering featured gazpacho, “Wonderland” salad, “Ace of Spades” braised short ribs, and a triple dessert (including an “Eat Me” macaroon). LP president Michelle Wiseman announced the 2019 major (over \$20,000) beneficiaries: Adaptive Sports and Recreation Association, Alpha Project for the Homeless, American Red Cross, Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater San Diego, Family Health Centers of San Diego, La Maestra Family Clinic, Outside the Lens, Rady Children’s Hospital, and San Diego Fire-Rescue. Dozens of minor beneficiaries will be named later. All beneficiaries are meticulously vetted by LP’s membership.

Guests ate, danced, and partied heartily all night, but at 1 a.m. LP members (and their “Lost Patron” husbands) changed from formal to grubby attire and worked until dawn dismantling the party so the LJB&T Club could promptly return to business as usual. It was a colossal effort, but will net perhaps \$1 million to benefit many worthy San Diego County nonprofit organizations.