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2012 Sonoma Valley Wine Auction Breaks Records

The annual wine-and-food event celebrated its 20th anniversary by raising \$730,000 for local charities.

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BY VIRGINIE BOONE



Ladies of Magnum Force

Often a light-hearted affair, the 2012 Sonoma Valley Harvest Wine Auction celebrated its 20th anniversary over the weekend and raised a record-breaking \$730,000, up \$130,000 from last year.

Approximately 550 guests attended the Sunday afternoon auction at Chateau St. Jean in Kenwood—a venue decorated in a Bollywood theme that perfectly showcased Sonoma County's harvest-time beauty, with surrounding vines dripping with grapes.

The weekend-long event, organized by the Sonoma County Vintners and the Sonoma Valley Vintners & Growers Foundation, promotes the county's

wine and food while raising money for local charities. This year, one of the 35 luxurious auction lots—the “Fund-a-Need” lot for Boys & Girls Clubs of Sonoma Valley and Central Sonoma County—broke records by raising a record-breaking \$252,000.

Other top lots included a private costume ball at Buena Vista Winery, which owner Jean-Charles Boisset generously matched for a total of \$20,000. That was quickly outdone by Boisset's wife, Gina Gallo, at her exclusive party at MacMurray Ranch lot, where 31 couples bid, bringing the final sale to \$31,000. The Gallo family matched the bid, bumping up the overall amount to a whopping \$62,000.

Other big-money items included a trip to New Orleans and the Carnivale du Vin with Dan Kosta and Michael Brown of Kosta Browne Winery, with the \$25,000 winning bid coming from Sonoma County restaurateurs Mark and Terri Stark. Another \$25,000 went for Magnum Force, a 76-bottle collection of regional wines, won by Rick Miron of TricorBraun Winepak, the auction's leading sponsor.

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Close on its heels was the lot to tour Laguna Seca raceway with Dempsey Racing and ABC's Grey's Anatomy actor Patrick Dempsey, which included a 20-person dinner party at Ram's Gate Winery. The winner—a local interior designer Barbara Pascoe, who co-owns Barbed Oak Vineyard with her husband Edmond in Sonoma's Bennett Valley—bid \$22,000 after auctioneer David Reynolds prodding the crowd to "take a spin with McDreamy."

The auction was a successful conclusion to a weekend full of winemaker lunches and dinners, including a new event, the Sonoma Starlight Supper Club dinner, held Friday night at Francis Ford Coppola Winery in Geyserville; and the annual Taste of Sonoma, held Saturday at MacMurray Ranch, which drew 1,200 people. The three-day annual event grossed a total of \$1.65 million.

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