

Published June 20th, 2012

## Lamorinda Women Launch Children's Health Guild

By Courtney Bennett



Participants have fun at Children's Health Guild May 12 event, from left: Susie Sovik, Katie Roberts, Eliza Veronda and Kendra Cullum. Photo Nikki Haramoglis

At the beginning of this year, a group of 50 Lamorinda women launched a new non-profit, the Children's Health Guild, to raise funds for Children's Hospital Oakland and the George Mark Children's House. Although the Guild is a new organization, the women were previously affiliated with a group known as St. Luke's Junior Auxiliary, and had significant experience supporting health care services for low-income women and children. Since its founding 38 years ago, St. Luke's Junior Auxiliary had raised nearly \$3 million for the St. Luke's Health Care Center in San Francisco, which provides a wide range of health care services for low-income women and children.

The motivation for creating a new non-profit started as a matter of simple geography. St Luke's Junior Auxiliary was originally founded by women in San Francisco, but as its membership shifted to the East Bay, the group found it increasingly challenging to keep its members connected to, and to raise funds for, a San Francisco-based health center. St. Luke's Health Care Center's financial fortunes also improved when it became part of California Pacific Medical Center (CPMC), which stabilized its funding.

When the group decided to change its affiliation, the first step was to identify a beneficiary. "We wanted to stay

true to our original mission of providing medical care for underserved communities, and focusing on pediatric medical care," said Ellie Attwood, the Children's Health Guild's first president. "We also wanted a cause that resonated with our membership, and to make sure there was a critical financial need."

With its mission to serve every child regardless of their parent's ability to pay and a patient population that largely depends on government-funded health care programs, Children's Hospital Oakland met all of the group's criteria. Members also felt a strong connection to the hospital, which had provided care to many of their children. One of the members also suggested George Mark Children's House, a facility in San Leandro that partners with CHO (and other Bay Area hospitals) to provide respite, transitional and hospice care for infants, babies and children. A crucial bridge between a hospital and a child's home, George Mark relies heavily on grants and private-sector funding. "Together these organizations provide children and their families with health care services for a child's full cycle of life," said Attwood.

With their beneficiaries in place, the next step was to get non-profit status. When they were St. Luke's Junior Auxiliary, the CPMC Foundation had provided the group's infrastructure and non-profit tax status, but now the Children's Health Guild needed its own non-profit status. Guild members applied for non-profit status through the state of California (which involves registering for a tax ID number, creating a mission statement and by-laws and forming a board), and received that designation last November. Next they applied for 501(c)3 status, which is a federal tax status that allows donations to the organization to be tax-deductible. Applying for 501(c)3 status is a more complicated and involved process that requires the help of an accountant or attorney.

Staff at the George Mark Children's House offered to support the Guild by recommending an attorney, and fronting the legal costs for the 501(c)3 application process.

GMCH co-founder and Medical Director Barbara Beach explained why they took the unusual step of helping the Children's Health Guild get its own nonprofit status. "We haven't done it before and don't anticipate doing it again, but we recognized their history as St. Luke's Junior Auxiliary and dedication to raising funds for children's health services," Beach said. "We felt confident that they would be successful, and that this would be a long-lasting relationship."

Beach described such a relationship, with the Guild providing on-going, long-term funds, as a win-win financially. Right now, the majority of GMCH's funding comes from grants, individual donors, organizations, and community fundraisers. It receives only about one-third of its funding as reimbursements from insurance companies or the government. "We are happy to support the Children's Health Guild," she said. "We think it's fabulous they raise funds for two entities that provide health care for the whole span of a child's life - for curative care, acute care, ongoing medical care and palliative care."

The Children's Health Guild held its first fundraiser on May 12 at the Orinda Country Club, drawing nearly 200 attendees from around the Bay Area. The Studio 54-themed event featured a sit-down dinner, and silent and live auctions, and netted approximately \$62,000 for the group's new beneficiaries. Representatives from Children's Hospital Oakland and the George Mark Children's House attended as well.

Reach the reporter at: [info@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:info@lamorindaweekly.com)

[back](#)

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA