



NEWS BENEFIT

## Wine, Women & Shoes 2013: Fighting domestic violence with style



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St. Helena's Charles Krug Winery was full of style on Saturday, with a crowd of 300 attending the second annual "Wine, Women & Shoes" event benefiting Napa Emergency Women's Services, a nonprofit that serves domestic and sexual abuse victims.

"This event is about the power of women supporting women," said NEWS Executive Director Tracy Lamb. "We are a sisterhood and when we

come together, amazing things always happen."

Napa's Jayme Grossi attended the event with her sister, Melissa Greenwell. "My aunt, Jennie Thayer, is an active board member for NEWS," Grossi said, "and we are familiar with the important work that they do and how great this event is."

"It's about empowering women," Greenwell added. "It's about defeating domestic violence and raising the awareness in the community."

Both sisters agreed it is also a day of fun. Attendees enjoyed a wide selection of wines and food from local restaurants. Live and silent auctions were held and a marketplace with a variety of vendors offered a stylish selection of items for sale. Local premium wines also were offered for sale in a wine pull, and a fashion show was held with local women acting as models.

But, the main attraction were the "Shoemmeliers," or as they were fondly referred to, "the shoe guys." The attractive men in black were helping in a variety of ways and their services were auctioned throughout the event.

"We have about 30 shoemmeliers from throughout the community — firemen, winemakers, business owners and friends of the Napa Valley," said Kelly Crane, who recruited the shoemmeliers at the event. All are interested in helping the community by donating their time, specifically, helping NEWS because it serves some of the most at-risk people in our community.

"Everybody likes to be here, it's a fun event and ... we make them feel like princesses for the day," said Crane, adding that his contribution will be preparing a seafood dinner for 8-16 people."

For Crane, participation at the event is about making a statement. "You are either part of the problem or part of the solution," he said. "By donating our time today we want to put an end to this cycle and help victims recover."

One of the recovering victims is Brenda Godinez, a local businessowner and a former NEWS client. There wasn't a dry eye in the crowd after Godinez shared her story.

Two decades ago she left an abusive marriage of 10 years. She fled from Mexico to find refuge with her family in Napa, but her violent husband, who is now incarcerated in Mexico, followed her.

"My family contacted NEWS so that they will help me find refuge from him. They gave me diapers, food, support and most importantly, a safe place for my children. Even though I was new to the country, NEWS opened their arms to me," she said.

"The most important thing that they taught me is to have confidence and trust in myself. Those mental skills helped me to succeed in life. Today, I am an independent woman. They gave me the tools necessary to take care of myself and my children."

In the shelter with Godinez were two other women who were persuaded by their husbands to return home. Both women were murdered by their husbands, Godinez said.

"Thank you, NEWS. You saved my life," she said. "There were many challenges and obstacles I've had to overcome but NEWS gave me the spring board to hurdle them. I want to say to the woman that are suffering and living in fear that we are there for them."

St. Helena Police Chief Jackie Rubin, who guided the live auction, said she is familiar with cases like Godinez's. When Rubin started 28 years ago, domestic abuse victims could bail out their husbands immediately. Now there is a cooling off period which "gives NEWS the chance to offer the victims a way out," Rubin said. "Victims need to know they have options and that they can survive without being in an abusive relationship."

Rubin, a great supporter of NEWS, also poured her own wine, Code 3, which she created with her husband. Proceeds from wine sales go to charitable causes, such as the burn unit and police survivors' funds.

"Today we donated our Russian River Chardonnay for the auction and to pour," she said. "Once you hear how NEWS helps these people and changes their lives, you can't help but give back."

"Our trained advocates come 24 hours a day," said NEWS Executive Director Lamb. "There is someone from NEWS to help support the victims of domestic violence. One of three girls in the world is affected by domestic violence and sexual abuse by the age of 18. It's an epidemic and the impact is devastating. We are here to make sure children can recover from the impact of domestic and sexual abuse."

NEWS officials noted that, although event proceeds are still being tallied, the annual "Wine, Women & Shoes" events provide substantial financial resources for the organization. The events are part of a nationwide fundraising effort started by Elaine Honig. Combining wine and shoe pairings, the fundraisers have raised more than \$15 million for causes in 50 cities supporting women and children.