

March 9, 2007

Panther Foundation GrandGala raises more than \$65,000

The third annual Panther Foundation GrandGala raised more than \$65,000 for students in School District 16, serving Blaine, Spring Lake Park, and Fridley.

"The generosity of guests and our event sponsors, Village Bank, Kraus-Anderson and Wold Architects, is just amazing," said Glenn Martin, chair of the Panther Foundation.

The money will be distributed in the school district through a grants process. In less than three years, nearly 50 grants have been awarded, serving kids from preschool through high school.

Grants have covered a variety of topics, from increasing basic skills in math and reading, to fostering talents in the arts, to innovative initiatives in enriching educational opportunities. In addition to grants, the Panther Foundation has supported a handful of investments in technology enhancements for the school buildings.

The GrandGala event started several weeks ago with sales of raffle tickets made possible by Friendly Chevrolet and DLK Audio and Video. The prizes were a Corvette for a weekend, 42" plasma TV, and an iPod. You didn't need to be present to win, but Jill and Corey Burstad, Blaine, were in attendance and surprised everyone in the room (including themselves) by winning both the TV and iPod. The weekend with a Corvette went to an appreciative Greg Sorenson, Farmington.

The GrandGala dinner with silent and live auctions held Feb. 24 at the Tournament Players Club (TPC) of the Twin Cities provided entertainment and good-natured competition to win unique items such as the chance to throw out a Ceremonial Pitch at a



Clockwise from upper left: Dr. Don Helmstetter, superintendent; Dr. Jeff Ronneberg, assistant superintendent; and Glenn Martin, Foundation chairperson, did a little entertaining to drum up interest in their German Heritage Dinner auction item. Martin with Corey Burstad, happy winner of a plasma TV. Hollis Cavner was a live auction donor as well as the winner of the Twins Game Ceremonial First Pitch auction item. Three Panther Foundation Lifetime Memberships were presented. Pictured are Colleen Pederson accepting on behalf of herself and husband Mike; Greg Dehler, accepting for Wold Architects & Engineers; and John Stroebel, accepting for the Kenneth Hall Elementary PTA.

Minnesota Twins game, won by Hollis Cavner; a German Heritage Dinner at superintendent Don Helmstetter's house, won by Ed and Sharon Krumme; and Caddy for a Golf Legend at the Senior PGA Tour's 3M Championship, won by Sue Walter. Other auction items included a Dinner with the 3M Championship Pros offered by Hollis and Catherine Cavner, and a Roller Blading Party for 25 from the Westwood Intermediate School staff.

GrandGala guests also donated generously to an ongoing project to place portable wireless computer labs ("Bringing the lab to the classroom, not the class to the computer room.") in each of District 16's schools.

"The Panther Foundation and the students we serve owe a tremendous thank you to businesses who contributed to the event, including Connexus Energy, Walters Recycling and Refuse, Tournament Liquor, Bill Koschak of General Mills, Quality Document Solutions, and Allegra Printing," Martin said. "It truly was a night to remember, thanks to the support of our contributors, guests, and volunteers."