

EYE ON O.C.



By Anne Valdespino



CINDY YAMANAKA, ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER
Lazy Dog Café raised \$2,259 for the Brea Education Foundation.

NOW, THAT'S SERVICE

LOCAL EATERIES WHIP UP HOLIDAY FUNDRAISERS IN SHORT ORDER.

Orange County restaurants were busy playing Santa in the weeks leading up to Christmas, showering local charities with donations. The Habit gave more than \$4,000 to local nonprofit groups. The Irvine-based chain held three fundraisers and gave all of the proceeds to three organizations: \$1,341 to the Muscular Dystrophy Association of Orange County & Inland Empire; \$1,991 to Irvine High School Athletics Booster Club; and \$964 to Share Our

Strength, an organization that combats childhood hunger in the U.S. Another popular restaurant group, Huntington Beach-based Lazy Dog Café, raised \$2,259 for the Brea Education Foundation. The donation will help buy instructional "Smart Carts" for teachers to use in classrooms and go toward mini-grants to fund projects in science, technology and art.
 - PAUL HODGINS, ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

CARING IS IN THEIR BLOOD

A SHARP-DRESSED CROWD PARTIES IN SANTA ANA TO HELP FIGHT SICKLE CELL ANEMIA.

IN THE DETAILS

HERE'S WHAT CAUGHT OUR EYE AT THE MASQUERADE BALL.



Faby Gachuzo of Anaheim peeks from behind her mask.



Actor Arjay Smith is among the guests.



Honoree Dr. Ky T. Vu with his wife, Tiffany, and daughter, Hailey.



Kendra Blankenship and her dad, Gary Blankenship (perhaps an opera lover?).

Groups of guests in masks and fashionable attire – many women in brightly colored dresses, while the men wore sharp, three-piece suits and fedoras – mingled at the Sickle Cell Foundation of Orange County's 2012 Annual Black Tie Masquerade Ball. The Dec. 15 fundraiser was held at the Double Tree Club by Hilton in Santa Ana.

President **Star Simmons** and her husband, **Elliott Simmons**, worked the crowd, warmly greeting everyone and making them feel welcome.

Guests included honorees **Lynn Minidis**, owner of Red Brick Pizza in Brea; and **Rodney Selbo**, owner of the Melting Pot in Brea, who sponsored the foundation's Charity Block Party on Birch Street in August. That event raised about \$16,000 and generated more than 100 units of blood.

"They did it all in one day. That's amazing," Star Simmons said.

The Simmonses' devotion to the cause is deep-rooted: both of their children have sickle cell anemia. Star learned about the disease while caring for her son, **Charon**, 23. Their daughter, **Alyssa**, 10, was diagnosed with sickle cell anemia while still in the womb.

In 2006, Star and her husband started the Sickle Cell Foundation.

Through the foundation, the family, along with donors and volunteers, help those with the disease by providing in-hospital tutoring and financial aid for medication.

Ultimately, their goal is to give those who suffer from sickle cell anemia the tools to help themselves. "I'm just trying to put that word out there and make a difference," Star said.

Star is just as determined to maintain a positive attitude at home. "There are no victims in my house," she said.
 - BENN HADLAND, FOR THE REGISTER



PHOTOS: KAREN TAPIA, FOR THE REGISTER

Charon Simmons, who has sickle cell anemia, plays up red accents at last month's Black Tie Masquerade Ball.



COURTESY OF LARICE PEOPLES, ENDEE MAGAZINE
Elliott and Star Simmons are the founders of the Sickle Cell Foundation of Orange County.



Maria Cordova, Jessica McCoy and Kenya Fambrough, from left.



Ama Darkwa and honoree Quentin Holmes, an author of children's books.

In the crowd

Art Evans, actor **Arjay Smith**, actor **Phil Gates**, musician **Donald Craig**, president of the Orange County branch of the NAACP **Dr. Ky T. Vu**, honoree for his work with the foundation **Quentin Holmes**, children's book author, also an honoree