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An Evening in Bloom



Honorees Ed and Win Van Wingerden with Carpinteria Girls Inc. executive director Victoria Juarez at the Evening in Bloom gala

Carpinteria Girls Inc. wasn't kidding when they named their gala "An Evening in Bloom." Hundreds, if not thousands, of orchids of every hue surrounded us at Westerlay Orchids greenhouse, where the event was held for the second year. What better honorees than two brothers, **Ed and Win Van Wingerden**, who for decades passionately supported Girls Inc. with leadership, generosity, advocacy, and service and are in the flower business, too.

The red carpet was laid out at the entrance, complete with photographer to snap guests' pictures. Inside the decorations were black, white, and orchids on all the dinner tables. There was an open bar and many canapés, with **Rick Reeves** playing music.

Master of ceremony was **Andy Sheaffer**. Former executive director **Ruthie Tremmel** paid tribute to the honorees followed by a video and comments from Girls Inc. of Carpinteria executive director **Victoria Juarez**. Thanks went especially to the co-chairs **Donna Baird** and **Stefanie Herrington** and their committee.

Special guest speaker was **Graciela Rodriguez**, who had everyone in tears with her personal Carpinteria Girls Inc. story. She has been part of the Girls Inc. family for 30 years, first as a member, then as an employee and now a member of the Girls Inc. National Latina Advisory Board. She is a first-grade teacher at Adelante Charter School on the Franklin School Campus.

There was a time when Graciela had bulimia and anorexia, was in the hospital, and had suicidal thoughts. Since then, she has written an essay



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titled *Breaking the Model*, which has been published at the university level. She has spoken to a large audience in New York. She has graduated from UCSB with a double major in Spanish and sociology, and earned her Master in Education Credential at Azusa Pacific. She certainly is a fabulous role model for all the girls. "Girls Inc. of Carpinteria is currently serving more than 700 girls ages 5-18 each year through a variety of programs," says Victoria.

Guests of honor Ed and Win also ran the live auction. How about a Lions Club barbecue for 50 folks or an Italian vacation? Maybe a vintage plane ride if you're shorter than 6-foot-2 and weigh fewer than 200 pounds, and can climb into a small cockpit. Dancing went on until 11 pm with The Rincons.

Some of those folks who help the girls become strong, smart and bold are board president **Clyde Freeman**, first vice president **Stefanie Herrington**, treasurer **Cindy Halstead** and secretary **Patricia Madrigal**, along with directors **Tracy Beard**, **John Cerda**, **May Crowley**, **Kiona Gross**, **Theresa Huerta**, **Amanda Kastelic**, **Tom Ligare**, **Bethel Mather**, **Gail Persoon**, **Nini Seaman**, and **Cheryl Wright**. You make a difference in many young



Co-chairs Stefanie Herrington and Donna Baird with Girls Inc. board members Tracy Beard, Gail Persoon, and Cheryl Wright

lives. To become a volunteer or offer support, visit www.girlsinc-carp.org/.