



EYE ON O.C. By Anne Valdespino

2012 IT'S A WRAP

Eye on O.C. is only a few months old, but in that time we've knocked ourselves out covering dozens of Orange County's glitzy galas and heroic volunteer events. Here's our take on the best of 2012.



DREW A. KELLEY, FOR THE REGISTER

BEST COCKTAIL BASH

Big Brothers Big Sisters Gourmet Dinner, Nov. 1

It was a sea of suits as 450 guests packed the patio of the Balboa Bay Club & Resort for a macho 90 minutes of Scotch tasting, a martini bar and cigar station.



ANA VENEGAS, THE REGISTER

BEST MAKEOVER

Seegerstrom Center for the Arts' 39th Annual Candlelight Concert, Dec. 7

Seegerstrom Concert Hall was transformed with rich jewel-colored lights, drapes, vignettes and live ballerinas using banisters as a barre.

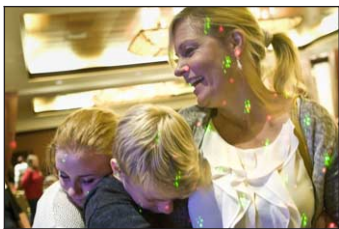


PAUL RODRIGUEZ, THE REGISTER

BEST MARRIAGE OF THEME AND CROWD

Laguna Playhouse's "California Dreamin'" gala, Nov. 16

The theme of this fundraiser went over big with the surf-centric crowd in Hawaiian shirts and flops, who spent dinner tossing beach balls.



CINDY YAMANAKA, THE REGISTER

BEST MOTHER AND CHILD CELEBRATION

Colette's Children's Home Holiday Dinner, Dec. 10

Kids received toys, a big dinner, sweet treats and a chance to pick out a gift for their moms. Awww!



STEVEN GEORGES, FOR THE REGISTER

BEST DEAD CELEB

Susan Claassen at the Working Wardrobes' benefit, Dec. 4-6

The actress owned the role of the costume designer in "A Conversation With Edith Head," reprising it at a luncheon. If she liked your outfit,



CHRISTINE COTTER, FOR THE REGISTER

BEST SHOW (TUNES)

Chapman University's "American Celebration," Nov. 2

The annual scholarship dinner and theatrical fundraiser starred a cast of more than 100 fresh-faced students, seen here with donor Julianne Argyros and President James L. Doti. The students sang, danced and sweated. They were great.

LO MEJOR GOURMEX

The Delhi Center's Zocalo fundraiser, Oct. 26

The Mexican food was more authentic than we had any right to expect at a catered affair for hundreds. "Ay Dios mio!" said Congresswoman Loretta Sanchez as she took her night's first bite of mole. The buffet included posole, tamales and icy horchata spiked with plenty of cinnamon.



JOSHUA SUDOCK, THE REGISTER

BEST CALORIC INVESTMENT

Pacific Chorale's "A Dickens Feast" gala, Dec. 16

Waiters at the Center Club presented old-fashioned Christmas plum pudding with brandy sauce, fit for Bob Cratchit and his brood. So



LARICE PEOPLES, ENDEE MAGAZINE

BEST HOSTESS

Orange County Sickle Cell Foundation Masquerade Ball, Dec. 15

Star Simmons, founder of the organization and chairwoman of the event, and her husband, Elliot, took the time to per-



KEVIN SULLIVAN, THE REGISTER

MOST ENTERTAINING ENTERTAINER

MenAlive's "Winter Spectacular," Dec. 13

Liza Minnelli had a head cold. She was away from home. She probably was making less than she'd earn at the Hollywood Bowl. But when she sang, her fellow performers - MenAlive, Orange County's gay men's chorus - were star-struck.



JOSHUA SUDOCK, THE REGISTER

HOTTEST MODELS

Guard A Heart Foundation's Black & White Ball, Oct. 27

Rita Hayworth (Toni Sky) and Marilyn Monroe (Grace Richardson) look-alikes mingled with the crowd, air kiss-



CHRISTINE COTTER, FOR THE REGISTER

BIGGEST (BEST) DRAG

Friends of Dorothy "Haunted Halloween Costume Party," Oct. 20

The AIDS Services Foundation's Friends of Dorothy swan song was a river of glitz and skin: Hooters girls, stewardesses and an "Eyes Wide Shut"-inspired party-goer.



PHOTO COURTESY OF MIGUEL POLA

BEST LIVE CELEB

Project Cuddle's Masquerade, Oct. 20

John Stamos turned heads at Bruno Serato's Anaheim White House, arriving in a Dolce & Gabbana tux on his back with a satiny mom, Loretta Stamos, on his arm.



DREW A. KELLEY, FOR THE REGISTER

BEST HOSTS IN COSTUME

Festival Ballet Theatre's Sugar Plum & Cavalier Tea, Dec. 9

Dancers bared their midriffs in Arabian outfits, struck poses in tutus and looked like princesses in tiaras. Tea sippers were dazzled.



COURTESY OF LAUNDRY LOVE

BEST HANDS-ON VOLUNTEERS

Laundry Love, Nov. 15

At the monthly event, young volunteers helped the needy fluff and fold their laundry. Photographer Moses Chiong added poignant pictures.



DREW A. KELLEY, FOR THE REGISTER

BEST ORGANIZED VOLUNTEERS

OC Noble Vikings' "Christmas Food Boxing," Dec. 23

Behind the Ritz Restaurant, volunteers packed 1,450 food boxes for needy families. The volunteers had fun and left