



Brad Benter (event co-chair), Cristull Hasson (event chair), Darlene Davies (event chair), Leonard Simpson (event producer), Phyllis Parrish (event chair), Kristi Pieper (event chair), Rod Alan Baker (event co-chair)



Richard and Arlene Esgate, Ellen Kardashian, Don and Kathryn Vaughn, Dr. Scott Miller



David Mulvaney, Brian Mulvaney, Ruth Mulvaney (honorary event chair and Lifetime Philanthropy Award honoree), Melinda McCabe, Jim Mulvaney



Charlie and Maureen King, Ofelia and Dr. John Alksne, Erika Martinez, Jathan Segur, Charo Garcia-Guerra



Molly Terbovich-Ridenhour (SDCYB executive director), Tina Chin (SDCYB board president), Caterina Brown (SDCYB advanced dancer), Ann Wilson (SDCYB alumna and Guild member), Danika Pramik-Holdaway (SDCYB artistic director), Robyn Carlson (SDCYB operations and program administrator)

A chance to dance

STORY AND PHOTOS BY VINCENT ANDRUNAS • SPECIAL TO THE U-T

EN POINTE AT THE PRADO

November is “10 Best Dressed” time — not only at “Vogue” magazine, but also in San Diego. Here, Fashion Forward founder Leonard Simpson holds his annual charity fundraising event by the same name, with daughter Brittany Noelle as co-producer.

The gala’s title isn’t precisely literally accurate. In reality, this year the event honored 15 women and 12 men as “Best Dressed.” But while all are quite stylish, they’re not necessarily the best-dressed folks in town — more important is their philanthropy and what they do for the community. As Simpson puts it, they “dress every day with gloves of compassion and a coat of courage.”

This year’s event, themed “En Pointe at the Prado,” benefited the San Diego Civic Youth Ballet, the classical ballet school resident in Balboa Park since 1945. Through education and participation, SDCYB gives San Diego youth opportunities to study, understand and appreciate the art of ballet, and to enrich the cultural life of the community.



Alexander Salazar, Jasmine Stiles, Dale Webster, Caroline Lopresti, Carey Reddick, Tyler Haney

Phyllis Parrish, Cristull Hasson, Darlene Davies, and Kristi Pieper chaired the event; Rod Alan Baker and Brad Benter co-chaired. Lifetime Achievement awards went to Darlene Davies, Jacqueline Foster, Jeanne Jones, Don Breitenberg, Dr. Manoj Motwani, John and Phyllis Parrish, Tom Truman, and honorary chair Ruth Mulvaney.

Best Dressed ladies were Ofelia Alksne, Darlene Davies, Arlene Esgate, Charo Garcia-Guerra, Cristull Hasson, Randi Hosking, Ellen Kardashian, Maryann Lawson, Ruth Mulvaney, Dottie Stanley, Lisa Sullivan, Kathryn Vaughn, and Lorna York. Best Dressed gentlemen were Rod Alan Baker, Brad Benter, Richard Esgate, Charlie King, Mark Krasner, Paul Marshall, Dr. Scott Miller, Edward Mracek, Alexander Salazar, Jathan Segur, David Stanley, and Don Vaughn.

Including family and friends of the many honorees, about 300 guests attended the black-tie event.

ONE-ON-ONE WITH TIFFANY GULLBERG

U-T profiles of notable local people

Instilling calmness in kids through yoga

STORY BY LISA DEADERICK ■ PHOTO BY CHARLIE NEUMAN

Tiffany Gullberg went to her first yoga class when she was 22. Though it was her first class, she fell in love with the practice. Fourteen years later, she’s the founder and owner of If I Was A Bird Yoga, a studio solely focused on guiding children through the practice.

“I fell in love with yoga and started taking trainings, education courses and certifications. I never could have imagined that I would be doing what I’m doing today,” she says. “When I was little, I always knew I wanted to work with children or write children’s books, so it’s really neat to see how that has come full circle. I am working with children, and I write the kids’ yoga stories and sequences.”

Gullberg, 36, is married with two daughters, and her classes focus on birds from different countries, incorporating dance and song, an art activity and relaxation and affirmation techniques. Gullberg, whose latest studio recently opened in Del Mar, took some time to talk about what led her to focus on yoga for kids, the improvements she’s seen in her students’ development and the after-school program she offers.

Q. What led you to open a studio for kids?

A. Well, the very first kids yoga class that I taught was at my first daughter’s day care center. They asked me to come in since they knew that I taught adults yoga. I went in not really knowing what to expect since I had never taught yoga to kids, just to adults. As I was teaching the class, I got a rush of joy and happiness and had goosebumps all over my body from the joy and love I felt. It was that moment when I knew what I wanted to do with my life. The very next day, I started my business. My kids yoga classes were mobile at first, bringing them to parks, other yoga studios, anywhere I could. After a while, I had numerous people and friends tell me I should open up a studio.

Q. What is your goal for your child-centered studios?

A. To provide a kids yoga community where kids can receive all the mental and physical benefits that yoga offers, a place where the kids can flourish and thrive in their yoga practice and also build friendships, and a place that supports playfulness and creativity but also has a good balance of yoga, peace and stillness.

Q. Why focus on birds?

A. Children love birds. They love flying around or feeling graceful or balancing. For every class we (pick) a different place in the world so we can make the classes educational for the children and keep them engaged in the practice. So for every place we go, we learn the national bird of that place. We use feathers to fly around and do special poses.

Q. What do you notice about the changes in kids at your studio?

A. They are always... calmer and more peaceful after every class. When we go around after class and share how we feel, the most common answers from the children are “I feel calm,” “I feel happy,” “I feel relaxed,” “I feel good.” It’s great to see the transition with the child after they have been practicing for a while. They understand the structure, the poses and even start to understand the breathing, which is so important. It’s so cute

how they come in and know exactly what to do. They take their shoes off, roll out their yoga mat and are ready.

Q. What do their parents notice?

A. Parents will often mention to me that they see yoga benefiting their child. Sometimes the parent is bringing the child in because their doctor has recommended yoga for different reasons: emotional or physical, like balance, strength or coordination. Parents will share with me that their doctor sees improvements in these challenges after yoga. I have had some parents use yoga as therapy for their child rather than taking them to a therapist. They will say, “The yoga has really helped with his anxiety and he will stop and take a deep breath or close his eyes” or “My child will tell me to relax and take a breath.” Parents with children with different abilities, special needs and/or behavioral chal-

What I love about Del Mar ...

I love the families and how passionate they are about wellness for their children. I love the calmness of Del Mar. It feels calm to me. Even though it’s busy, it feels peaceful.

lenges constantly mention that yoga is ... helping them relax, with balance, muscle strength, coordination and to just feel peaceful. After class, we focus on three affirmations. For example, “I am kind, I am thankful, I am loving,” and we repeat them. Parents tell me the affirmations are life-changing.

Q. Tell us about your after-school program.

A. I started doing after-school programs three years ago. We go into schools and offer the after-school yoga enrichment program. This is convenient for parents since we come to them and it’s right after school. The purpose is to just share yoga with as many kids as possible and get them exposed and then hopefully they will want to deepen and grow their yoga practice at the studio.

Q. Take us through what one of your kids classes is like.

A. Our program is one hour and 15 minutes. We start with a themed, educational art project. For example, if our class is visiting Hawaii during yoga, we will paint and make palm trees and do coconut stamping. The actual yoga part of the

program is 45 minutes with relaxation. The yoga class is structured through a set sequence where we do all the same yoga poses we do as adults but sprinkled with playful elements to keep the kids engaged. We start with a fun song, we stretch and warm up, we do a series of poses and movements, we dance, we balance, cool down and then

relax. Each child gets a cold lavender towel, face massage and foot massage, and covered with a blanket. Our relaxation therapies are always optional and we ask the child first. They love this part of the class. After the yoga portion, we end with a healthy snack and cold water.

Q. What’s been challenging about your work?

A. I think the greatest challenge has been to educate the community and parents about how beneficial (yoga) is and that it is just as important as going to gymnastics or ballet or swimming each week, if not more. But I feel I’m at a really good place now and have done a good job with this. There is a lot more awareness about it now that even pediatricians are recommending yoga to their patients.

Q. What’s been rewarding about it?

A. To see how the community has really grown, to see how happy the kids are coming to the studio.

Q. What have you learned about yourself as a result?

A. I have learned how strong I am and how much drive and passion I have. There were times when I struggled. It’s hard to start a business and keep it going, especially with a family. I’ve struggled in ways I couldn’t have imagined but I always got through those struggles. When I asked myself should I go on, the universe always somehow showed me that I was right where I was supposed to be. It somehow provided for me and showed up for me. My mom calls me Mighty Mouse — little, but so strong.

Q. What is the best advice you’ve ever received?

A. To make sure I got outside every day no matter what.

Q. What is one thing people would be surprised to find out about you?

A. My memory and the way my brain works. I remember everything and I am very very detail-orientated.

Q. Describe your ideal San Diego weekend.

A. Sleeping in on Saturday morning. My husband always makes us Swedish pancakes. We have breakfast together and coffee, of course. Relaxing at home for most of the morning. Going to the beach with a picnic for lunch and relaxing. On Sunday, taking a yoga class for myself, going for a walk and just being with my family. Always a nice family dinner on Sunday, and my brother (who is my husband’s best friend, which is how we met) and his wife come over.

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