cancer treatments. In spite of having three children under 5, she joined up. She's spent many years on the board and as the chair. She has done the same for many other organizations in town. Thanks went to her whole family, including husband Jamie.

The Helping Hands Award went to Southern California Edison Ventura District. Since 2010, they have collected a total of $100,000. It all began when Angela King had a friend whose child, Jeffrey, was battling leukemia. After seeing what Teddy Bear did for him, everyone pitched in. They have shopped for and wrapped Christmas gifts, assembled Easter baskets and Thanksgiving food gift baskets. They have also given fundraisers like golf tournaments, food fests, and more.

The Pay It Forward Award went to the Solodon family. The family began receiving support in 2003 when their 16-year-old daughter, Becca, was diagnosed with cancer. Founder Nikki Katz coordinated for Becca to participate in a studio singing session. It was so successful, she got to sing with Mariah Carey at the Arlington Theatre. Her mom had to quit her kindergarten-teaching job during Becca's long recovery. Mom still volunteers in many ways. Becca is now the organization's program director. She has been with Teddy Bear for 10 years. Becca's dad has been there all along the way as well.

Of all the events I attend, I don't think I've ever seen so many paddles raised as there were at this luncheon. Andrew threatened the audience, "If you don't all raise to donate, the valets won't give you your car back." It must have worked. The hard-working co-chairs were Lacy Taylor and Kathy Kelley along with Hal Price.

Some of those attending the fete were Sheela and Mark Hunt, Gary Caesar, Aaron Clark, Travis Wilson, Natalie Grubb Campbell, and Renee Grubb.

Besides all the adults working to help, there is a whole cadre of kids who have bake sales, and events with the proceeds going to Teddy Bear - philanthropy at a young age. If you'd like to support in any way, call (805) 962-7466.

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Arts & Lectures Opening

UCSB Arts & Lectures had a powerhouse season opening with the appearance of Lila Downs at the sold-out Granada. Downs has a past as dramatic as her three-octave vocal range. She is the daughter of a Mixtec Indian woman, Anastasia Sanchez, who ran away from her village at 15 to sing in Mexico City cantinas, and Allen Downs, a University of Minnesota professor.

Lila grew up in two countries and claims them both. She studied classical voice and cultural anthropology at the University of Minnesota, and has been influenced in many ways especially by the ancient cultures that inspire her. She has fans that span a wide spectrum of ages, races, and backgrounds.

Lila has been traveling for 20 years and sings blues, jazz, rock, rap, and more. She also sings in both Spanish and English and the languages of Mixtec. She has recorded nine studio albums, garnering a Grammy Award and four Latin Grammys, plus awards for live performances. As she says, “I’ve grown up in a field dominated by males, many of whom are difficult to deal with. I learned to become strong and stubborn.”

Lila has been invited to sing at the White House and performed at the 75th Academy Awards ceremony, doing an Oscar-nominated song “Burn It Blue.”

To make the Granada opening more special, an hour before curtain in front of the Granada appeared the Chinelos of Santa Barbara and Southern California and Grupo Folklorico de UCSB. These groups were Mexican-inspired costumes, so colorful, while dancing to live music. When Lila saw
Twilight on the Pacific

United Way of Santa Barbara County (UWSBC) held its annual Red Feather Ball and lit up the Pacific literally, for its theme "Twilight on the Pacific." We had cocktails and conversation, plus a silent auction on the terrace of the Coral Casino. As the sun set, the spotlights came on over the ocean.

Peter MacDougall chaired the event and the honoree was Maryan Schall. Emcee and auctioneer Andrew Firestone gathered the sold-out crowd into the dining room, where Merryl Brown had done her magic with the ocean theme, draping all the walls in a soft ocean blue. President/CIO Steve Ortiz told us about "Fun in the Sun (FITS)." "It is a six-week summer learning program for local academically and financially at-risk children and families." They improve their skills one to two grade levels, and it was the winner of the National Excellence in Summer Learning Award by the National Summer Learning Association.

Then there is the United for Literacy (UFL) to improve high school graduation rates. There are three components: parent engagement, access to books, and online literacy programs. To carry out this program, community volunteers serve. These two programs combined reach 5,000 disadvantaged Santa Barbara children and families. The Red Feather Ball raised about $250,000 each year to sustain FITS and UFL.

My husband, Don, has fond memories when he worked for Raytheon and headed up the United Way campaign for his company—the largest contributor in Santa Barbara at that time.

Longtime friend Bob Montgomery gave Maryan her Abercrombie Community Excellence Award. Besides her many accomplishments, she even went back to school for her Ph.D. after raising four children. In her acceptance speech, she was promoting a group called "Women United" which is in six countries and has raised $1 million since 2002 to help women. She concluded by saying, "If you haven’t already heard from us first, you will surely hear from us. United Way is working to build better futures." UWSBC’s phone number is (805) 965-8591.

Guests at the United Way
Peter, Rodney Baker, Debbie Searles, Barbara Kummer, Carol Wathen, and Robert Osley

United Way president/CIO Steve Ortiz with honoree Maryan Schall

Leslie and Peter MacDougall, who was United Way chair

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