

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

MISS BIGELOW *Social City*

Hospital easy sell for Salesforce titan

A mere nine months ago at the Masonic Auditorium, the \$100 million man and woman, **Marc Benioff**, Salesforce.com founder and his wife, philanthropist **Lynne Benioff**, raised \$3 million at a concert starring **Neil Young** with retired Gen. **Colin Powell** in support of UCSF's new Benioff Children's Hospital at Mission Bay.

Just last week at Davies Symphony Hall, the duo raised \$5 million more during "The Concert," starring **Alanis Morissette** and comedian **Jay Leno**, for completion of this \$600 million, state-of-the-art facility, scheduled to open in 2014, which will offer a 289-bed hospital complex for children, women and cancer patients.

The Benioffs are both low key. And in spite of hosting a second, successful shindig for the hospital that bears their name, they're rather press-shy about their accomplishments.

"Isn't it great?" asked Marc Benioff, surprised at the turnout. "It was a big bet that's really paying off for the hospital. And it's also about our community stepping forward and saying, 'We want a new hospital in Mission Bay.'"

Shy he may be. But savvy? Definitely. Benioff has timed what is planned to be an annual event to coincide with his company's annual Dreamforce conference, which includes a UCSF-led state-of-health-care component.

Many of the 45,000 attendees happily shelled out \$1K per ticket to partake of this

sparkly fete featuring a bountiful cocktail buffet, sets by Leno and Morissette, and a rollicking post-party with **will.i.am** and **MC Hammer** in the Opera House foyer.

Those big bucks, raised under the auspices of the Salesforce.com Foundation, were given a boost by Zendesk CEO **Mikkel Svane**. Svane just opened the doors to the Danish cloud-based help desk software provider in San Francisco's Mid-Market area and pledged \$1 million to the hospital for the next year from a portion of their sales. The cherry atop this sundae? Zendesk employees who also participate in hospital volunteer programs.

"Marc and Lynne are representative of the new philanthropists of San Francisco," enthused Mayor **Ed Lee** pre-concert, during a reception that included his wife, **Anita Lee**.

"They're in the same mode of **Charles Schwab**, the **Fisher** family and **Barbara and Dick Rosenberg**, all of our great philanthropists who understand the city's needs," he said. "And Marc is leading that next generation."

Lee also pointed out that it is the tech in-



Photos by Catherine Bigelow / Special to The Chronicle



Above: Lynne and Marc Benioff, with Jay Leno, at Davies Symphony Hall, where they hosted a concert for UCSF's Benioff Children's Hospital. Left: Jennifer and Chad Rego and daughter Grace.

dustry, which his administration is luring to the Mid-Market and Tenderloin neighborhoods with tax breaks, that is making the money these days. But they are also sharing it with those in need.

"If other companies move as fast as Marc," noted Lee, with a laugh, "I'm going to be sure to be at every ribbon-cut-

ting."

Among those in the sold-out crowd of supporters: Lt. Gov. **Gavin Newsom**; UCSF CEO **Mark Laret**; **Sam Hawgood**, dean of UCSF's School of Medicine; and tech titans **Ron Conway**, **Brook Byers**, **Sandy Robertson** and his wife, **Jeanne Robertson**, **Yelp CEO Jere-**

my Stoppelman, **Kenandy CEO Sandra Kurtzig** and **Flip founder Jon Kaplan**, who just launched the Melt, his high-tech, grilled-cheese start-up resto on New Montgomery Street.

"Just a few miles from here, there are 150 children who are spending the night at UCSF fighting for their lives, fighting against cancer, fighting for normalcy," said UCSF Chancellor **Sue Desmond Hellmann**. "Each one has a story. Tonight, with your support, we honor them."

But one of those children, **Grace Rego** of

Piedmont, happily appeared onstage with her parents, **Jennifer** and **Chad Rego**, to receive the UCSF Gen. Colin Powell Medal of Courage.

Just seven months ago, the 4-year-old was diagnosed with severe scoliosis. And her panicked parents turned in desperation to UCSF.

"I started bawling on the phone, begging the receptionist to try and get us in to see a specialist right way," admitted Jennifer Rego. "The severity of the curvature in Grace's spine usually doesn't happen in a child this young, so we really hit the panic button."

Five weeks ago, Dr. **Mohammad Diab**, chief of UCSF's Department of Pediatric Orthopedic Surgery, successfully performed a cutting-edge technique by inserting staples into key points along Grace's spine.

"When you think of advanced care," said her mom, beaming, "you think about UCSF."

Wrapping up his stellar set, Leno leaned toward the audience and gave a shout-out to "Mama Benioff."

"It all starts with Mom," said Leno, paying tribute to Marc's mom, **Joelle Benioff**. "You did OK. That's a good kid."

Chronicle society correspondent Catherine Bigelow's columns appear Wednesday in Datebook, Sunday in Style and at SFGate.com. E-mail her at missbigelow@sfgate.com.

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Illustration: Mike Twoby

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