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Naples Winter Wine Festival



COREY PERRINE/STAFF (2)

Julian Movsesian is congratulated Saturday after winning Lot 18, "The Ultimate First Dawn," a 2016 Rolls-Royce Dawn ultra luxury convertible soft top, during the Naples Winter Wine Festival's charity auction at The Ritz-Carlton Golf Resort, Naples. Movsesian's winning bid was \$750,000.

Auction's gift to Collier kids: \$10.9M

By Melhor Marie Leonor
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There's no official count of how many bottles of wine were consumed, or how many times paddles went up in the air.

Eight was the number of featured vintners, 17 was the number of master sommeliers on hand, \$750,000 was the top bid for the world's first Rolls-Royce Dawn and at least \$10.9 million was the amount of money raised to serve Collier County children in need.

By the numbers, that was Saturday's charity auction at the Naples Winter Wine Festival, which benefits the Naples Children & Education Foundation.

The auction was the culminating event in a week of festivities that attracted donors from Florida and beyond for lavish dinners, fine wine and the company of millionaires.

"It's a marathon," said Kathleen Mezzalingua, who splits her time between upstate New York and Naples, and was joined by her husband and daughter Saturday.

Official amounts are still being tallied, but organizers predict that the live auction raised at least \$10.9 million. That's less than last year's auction, which brought in \$12.3 million.

naplesnews.com/winefestival

See videos and more photos of the Naples Winter Wine Festival auction.

The auction proceeds will be divided into grants toward local nonprofits that support early learning, health services and child advocacy services. The grants will be presented in March.

"We are the largest funder of these kinds of services in Collier County," said Maria Jimenez-Lara, the chief executive officer of the Naples Children & Education Foundation.

She said the 2016 event was notable in that it brought more newcomers than last year's event, and included many who traveled from outside the state.

Among them were Joe Anderson and Mary Dewane, who traveled from California. The couple own Benovia Winery in Santa Rosa.

They made the winning bid for a trip through Italy that will include wine tastings and a stay in Venice.

"We looked at it last night and had our eyes on it. We love Italy and love wine," Dewane said.

The Naples Winter Wine Festival officially ends Sunday with a farewell brunch at The Ritz-Carlton Golf Resort. Official fundraising totals will be released Monday.



Danny Henderson touches the LED-enabled hood ornament of the Rolls-Royce Dawn on Saturday.

Collier County Housing fund gets 2nd look

■ Little money collected, none paid out in previous effort

By Greg Stanley
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During Collier County's last housing boom, when affordable places to own or rent were as scarce as they are today, county commissioners created an affordable housing trust fund.

Developers who didn't set aside a certain number of apartments or homes where teachers, sheriff's deputies, young families and others in the workforce could afford to live would pay into the fund based on the size of their new developments.

The money was to be used to help spur workforce and middle-class housing, through developer incentives or mortgage or down payment assistance for homebuyers.

The program amounted to nothing.

It lasted through the highs of the housing bubble in 2005, 2006 and 2007, when property values set records. Some large and marquee developments were to pay into the fund, such as Mercato, Cocohatchee Bay and Sabal Bay.

But of the \$8 million developers agreed to pay, the county collected only \$604,581, primarily because the payments were tied to home and lot sales that either never went through or were delayed for years when the housing market crashed, development agreements show.

Not a dime of the money that was collected was spent.

The recession hit in 2008, and the county stopped collecting fees for the trust fund altogether. Commissioners voted in 2011 to officially

See Pages 14A and 15A for more stories and photos about the auction

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Naples | Fifth Avenue South

Council OK'd development concept that was rejected in '03

By Joseph Cranney
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Naples City Council approved a controversial Fifth Avenue South redevelopment project last fall, more than a decade after a previous council rejected a near-identical concept based on an analysis that the plans violated

the city charter.

By voting against a developer's request in 2003 to construct a three-story hotel above a level of underground parking, the council followed the opinion of its lawyer, Bob Pritt, who said the project likely violated charter limits on building design.

In November, Phil McCabe —

the same developer whose 2003 project was rejected — came to the council with his plans for a three-story building with underground parking in the 400 block of Fifth Avenue South.

This time, Pritt's 2003 legal analysis wasn't included in any public discussions about the project, nor is there any record

that he was asked to give a new opinion.

The relevant history on the 2003 project and legal analysis of underground parking wasn't included in the council packet compiled by city staff, even though Planning Director Robin

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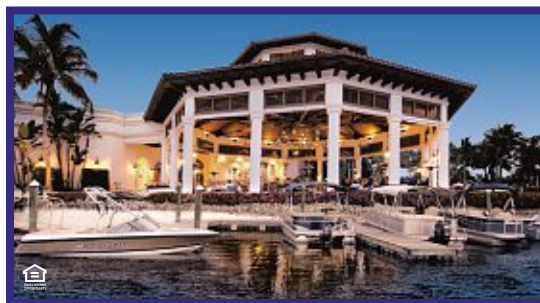
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7 sections • 164 pages

Main number: 239-213-6000



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Naples Winter Wine Festival

Calif. couple driving a Dawn after big win

By Maryann Battle

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It's a new Dawn for Julian and Aleen Movsesian.

Their \$750,000 bid Saturday at the Naples Winter Wine Festival won them the world's first 2016 Rolls-Royce Dawn, with an Artic White exterior and a Consort Red leather interior.

The fashionable fetch was too alluring for Julian Movsesian to pass up.

"It's a special car, and it's the first," he said.

Rolls-Royce is seeing "tremendous demand" for the Dawn, said Joseph Wierda,

general manager for the luxury automaker's southern region.

The convertible Dawn is sleek and eye-catching like a sports car, but spacious enough to seat four people, Wierda said.

"You can invite your spouse and a couple in pure luxury and pure comfort," he said.

The Dawn is fully customizable, and the wine festival lot gives Julian Movsesian the chance to choose everything from the trim to the color of the umbrella that pops out from the passenger side like a James Bond movie prop.

Rolls-Royce will deliver the car to the Movsesians by March, Wierda said. It will be

flown to the United States straight from the south of England, the home of Rolls-Royce, he said.

The Movsesians, who live in California, said they have visited Naples for the past few years just to attend the auction and raise money for the Naples Children & Education Foundation.

In previous years, the Movsesians have won other lots, including a safari and a trip to Cuba, Aleen Movsesian said.

Helping children is a priority, Julian Movsesian said.

"Children are our future and helping educate the kids — we all will have a better future," he said.

THE LOTS

\$750,000

LOT 18

The Ultimate "First Dawn:" World's first 2016 Rolls-Royce Dawn

\$720,000

LOT 30

Rocking at BottleRock: Six-day exclusive trips to Napa Valley music festival for six couples

\$650,000

LOT 49

L'Avventura Ferrari: One Ferrari 488 Spider customized for winning bidder

\$440,000

LOT 39

Five Decades of Napa Valley Legends: Once-in-a-lifetime dinner for eight couples with iconic Napa Valley wine producers and their wines

\$400,000

LOT 14

Guess Who's Coming to (and Cooking) Dinner: Cooking class and dinner hosted by Mario Batali and Glenn Close for 10 people

\$350,000

LOT 35

Ay Carumba!: Four-night luxury trip to New Zealand for two couples

\$320,000

LOT 38

An Asian Adventure by Airplane & Aman: Private jet journey across Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, the Philippines and Japan for one couple

\$260,000

LOT 4

Meet the Masters: Exclusive trip to Masters golf tournament in Augusta for four people

\$260,000

LOT 12

A Truly Grand Way to Travel: Unforgettable 15-day journey through Europe

\$240,000

LOT 24

Curtain Calls, Cameras & Carats, Oh My!: Star-studded New York City experience for two couples



DAVID ALBERS/STAFF

Candy DeBartolo, center, wife of former San Francisco 49ers owner Edward DeBartolo, celebrates her winning bid of \$400,000 for dinner with chef Mario Batali and actress Glenn Close during the Wine Festival's charity auction on Saturday.

Special dinner guests

Candy DeBartolo can't drink too much, she said, but she's into food.

So she kept raising her paddle in a bidding war for a special dinner and cooking class with renowned chef Mario Batali and movie star Glenn Close.

DeBartolo's \$400,000 got her the lot, and she was jazzed. The chance to dine with Glenn Close is quite the treat, DeBartolo said.

"She's a special lady, and I admire her," said DeBartolo.

DeBartolo is also opening a restaurant in Tampa that will be named "Sacred Pepper," she said.

Learning from Batali will likely help, she said.

"Whatever I can pick up, as far as tips or whatever," DeBartolo said.

Plus, she is making an impact in children's lives and connecting with friends of friends.

"It's such a small community," DeBartolo said.

Maryann Battle



COREY PERRINE/STAFF

Dan Mezzalingua jokingly reacts to his losing bid for the dinner with Mario Batali and Glenn Close. His wife, Kathy, left, said she "thought \$400,000 was enough."

Happy to be there

Before the auction, Dawn Schiff perused a pastry-laden table under a Naples Winter Wine Festival tent with her husband, Bob.

They were first-time patrons of the annual lavish fundraiser, which happens on the manicured grounds of the Ritz-Carlton Golf Resort, Naples. The Schiffs live in Cincinnati and own a home in Naples. Their friends' praises persuaded them to join the festival fun this year.

"It's been everything and more," Dawn Schiff said.

The Schiffs attended one of the exclusive dinners Friday night. They met Steve Spurrier and George Taber.

Spurrier is a British wine merchant. Taber wrote a book about Spurrier, "Judgment of Paris."

For Bob Schiff, it was a night to remember. He collects wines — everything from pinot noir to cabernet sauvignon.

Among his favorites are Valdicava wines,

from Italy, because of "the depth, the balance and how they evolve over time" after uncorked.

"It's a very different tasting wine an hour or two later," he said.

Although they entered the auction uncommitted to a lot, the Schiffs said they were ready to soak it all in.

"You're doing something important and having a good time doing it," Dawn Schiff said.

Maryann Battle

No toying around

Surrounded by his grandchildren, years ago, John Jordan sat before a screen to watch Disney Pixar's "Toy Story."

He did it purely to please his grandchildren but quickly found himself enchanted by what would become one of his favorite films.

"Eventually I said, I really like this movie — whether they do or don't," said Jordan, a Naples resident.

He remembered that experience as he raised his paddle over and over to eventually win Lot 27, a ticket to meet "Toy Story" Director John Lasseter.

His winning bid of \$180,000, which his family will share with two other local couples, will take them to Sonoma Valley, where Lasseter and his

wife, Nancy Lasseter, live and produce wines. The group will also get a tour of the Pixar Animation Studios.

Jordan said he sought the lot because it is what he calls, an "experience lot." The Lasseters, who donated it, agree.

"We wanted to put together something that was more of an experience. No one can just get into Pixar. That's a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity," John Lasseter said.

The Lasseters explained that their visitors will get an extensive history of animation, a ride aboard a train on a 2-mile track that runs through their Northern California estate — and more.

"You hear of food and wine pairings," John Lasseter said. "We do cartoon and wine pairings."

Melhor Marie Leonor

John Jordan, left, kisses his wife, Barbara, after winning a Pixar vacation package, a ticket to meet "Toy Story" director John Lasseter, on Saturday at The Ritz-Carlton Golf Resort, Naples.

COREY PERRINE/STAFF



Naples Winter Wine Festival



William Costello

The joy of wines

You can smell the difference between a white Burgundy from France and one from California.

Just ask master sommelier William Costello.

Costello poured a French version of the golden elixir into a glass and swirled it. He held it up to a woman's nose. "It's clean. It's bright. It's precise," Costello said from behind a wine station under a Naples Winter Wine Festival tent.

He poured a California vintner's white Burgundy and repeated the motions he made before. Swirl. Nose. "It's got sort of a more baked apple, baked notes, to it," Costello said.

Most people may not be able to tell the difference. But Costello has trained and refined his palate so he can introduce others to the joy of wine tasting.

The former busboy was working two jobs and going to college when a waiter offered him a glass of sauvignon blanc from New Zealand.

"It changed my life," Costello said. Later, he moved on to a fine dining restaurant in San Diego, where he gained a mentor who helped him find his way.

It was his first trip to the Naples Winter Wine Festival, and Costello said it has been a memorable experience.

"I've never been to a wine festival as put together as this," Costello said.

Maryann Battle



COREY PERRINE/STAFF

Server Aaron Makimoto, of Bonita Springs, walks past wineglasses as patrons arrive at Saturday's charity auction at The Ritz-Carlon Golf Resort, Naples.



DAVID ALBERS/STAFF

Tracy Mezzalingua, of New York, bids on a trip to Rome during Saturday's Naples Winter Wine Festival charity auction. Mezzalingua's bid of \$160,000 won a four-night stay at a five-star hotel in Rome for her and her fiancé, a sneak peek at Bulgari's latest High Jewelry collection and \$40,000 credit toward the purchase of jewels.

'Diva' Italia

Tracy Mezzalingua doesn't consider herself a diva, rather, someone who appreciates fine jewelry and really enjoys "nice things."

Then there's her knack for competition. So when the opportunity to peruse Bulgari jewels in Rome, and keep a few, came in the form of Lot 56 — "Viva La Diva" — Mezzalingua engaged in one of the longest bidding wars seen Saturday.

"I said, 'I'm going to make sure I get it,'" said Mezzalingua, who on one occasion almost outbid herself in the frenzy of the auction. "It was scary."

Her bid of \$160,000 will get her and her fiancé a four-night stay at a five-star hotel in Rome and a sneak peek at Bulgari's latest High Jewelry collection. She'll also get a \$40,000 credit toward the designer's jewels.

"I wasn't giving up that one," she said.

Melhor Marie Leonor

Well worth the effort

A 10-day "insider trip" to Chile and Argentina with vintners Shari and Garen Staglin raised \$350,000.

And Shari Staglin said she is thrilled.

"My husband goes to such great lengths to put this together," she said.

For the past three decades, the family has owned a 50-acre Napa Valley vineyard, known for its cabernets, she said.

"We love wine," Shari Staglin said.

They appealed to their friends for help putting the lot together.

"And they came through," Shari Staglin said. "They donated everything."

The lot includes several bottles of wine and accommodations in both countries.

Knowing their effort has reaped a significant donation for Collier County's children feels like an accomplishment, even though the family lives in California, she said.

"We care a lot about the children," Shari Staglin said. "We care about the good it does here."

Maryann Battle



DAVID ALBERS/STAFF

Volunteer Kristine Koch, of Naples, watches the bidding action as she helps identify bids during Saturday's auction.

Their color? Burgundy

Friday night, three couples — neighbors inside Naples' Mediterra community — got together and set their sights on a trip to Burgundy, France.

They pored over the listing of lots and debated over weeks and destinations. Lot 4, with its six

magnums of wine, a weeklong stay at the Château de la Créé and private tours of Burgundy vineyards, came out as the group's most desired lot.

"We decided this was the first lot we were going to bid on," said Harry Rose, a restaurateur who owns franchises on the east coast of the U.S. "We like wine but love Burgundy."

Rose was designated as the group's paddle holder Saturday while the other team members debated the bid amount and whispered in his ear.

"Maybe they thought I wouldn't drink as much wine," Rose said.

Melhor Marie Leonor