

GOOD NEIGHBOR: JACQUIE OLIVERIUS: Inaugural Encore for Educators event honors teachers in county

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SOMETIMES, the best things begin with a question: "Why don't we do that?"

In this case, the "that" was the way Washington Mutual had in the past purchased all the available seats for single day's matinee performance on Broadway and then had given the tickets to teachers who were nominated and their guests to honor teachers in New York and New Jersey.



Inspired by that, Scott MacCormac, first vice president at Washington Mutual and **Diablo Regional Arts Association (DRAA)** board member, decided that the same type of thing could be done locally and his company could buy out a performance at the Leshar Center for the Arts.

"This event is WaMu's way of thanking local educators for all they bring to the community," said MacCormac. "The teachers attending this event work incredibly hard and deserve an evening of celebration."

And so Encore for Educators was born. The inaugural event was held April 17, bringing together approximately 200 educators from throughout the county.

The event was a partnership between WaMu and the Diablo Regional Arts Association and featured a performance by the Center REPeritory Company's "Bingo! the Musical" following a reception in the Bedford Gallery, said Julie Dalrymple, marketing and program manager for DRAA.

"During the performance, the audience was invited to play bingo, and three lucky teachers walked away with prizes, ranging from \$300 to \$1,000 in cash for their classes and schools, provided by WaMu, as well as field trips for their entire grade level to the Leshar Center, provided by DRAA's Arts Access program," said Dalrymple.

The winners were Stacy Cerruti, a kindergarten teacher from Walnut Heights Elementary School in Walnut Creek, who won \$150 for her class plus \$150 for her school; Kate Guidi, who teaches second grade at Highlands Elementary School in Pittsburg and who won \$250 for her class plus \$250 for the school; and Lori Cattarusa, a first-grade teacher from Cambridge Elementary School in Concord, who won \$500 for her class and \$500 for her school. All three were invited on stage for a photo with the cast and MacCormac.

The event, which included Walnut Creek Mayor Sue Rainey and county Superintendent of Schools Joseph Ovick among the guests, was a huge success. And hats off to the 20 local WaMu branch managers who volunteered to help out for the evening.

"Seeing the smiles on the faces of these teachers tonight was incredibly rewarding," said Peggy White, DRAA executive director. "The prize winners were so deserving and we're thrilled to have been able to partner with WaMu to provide such an amazing night for these educators."