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JEFF FRANK

Agency salutes its 'super' supporters

Rabbi Nadav Crain, from Ner Tamid Synagogue, opened the Interfaith Community Services annual meeting on Wednesday by quoting the section in Leviticus in which we are told to "Love thy neighbor."

The rest of the meeting was spent illustrating how the volunteers and financial supporters of the agency live up to that precept. Executive Director Suzanne Stewart Pohlman called them "A Community of Heroes," for the way they have come through during recent times of economic distress.

With requests for social services up 25 percent in 2008-09 over the previous year and food demand up 35 percent, things were going to be tight for Interfaith even before some of its government and corporate supporters reduced donations to deal with their own financial issues.

That's where the community stepped up, said Pohlman. Individuals, faith communities and family foundations increased their contributions, enabling the Escon-

did-based agency, which had to do some belt-tightening of its own, to meet those growing needs.

"Each one of you is a caped crusader," she said. "You have done wonderful things and are super-heroes in our book."

To go with that superhero theme, Interfaith handed out capes to the perhaps 500 people who nearly filled the sanctuary at Rancho Bernardo Presbyterian Church. On the back, in blue, was the agency's logo above the word "Superhero!"

One of those heroes, sadly, was recognized posthumously. Billy D. Viele had already been selected by Interfaith to receive its Saemi Award for outstanding volunteer service when he was hit by a car and killed Aug. 1.

Viele's granddaughter Beki Andreassen accepted the award, recognizing Viele for 21 years of volunteer and philanthropic contributions. Andreassen is already following in her grandfather's footsteps. She has set up a Web site — missiongiveonline.org — to honor his memory by encouraging support of two of his favorite charities, Interfaith and the San Diego Blood Bank.

Other illustrations of helping others came from the stories of several people who turned their lives around after connecting with Interfaith and its wide array of services, which range from providing food and shelter to programs assisting veterans, recovering alcoholics, day laborers, at-risk youths and many more.

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They were perfect testimonials to the value of living up to that biblical charge to "Love thy neighbor."

Barbecue bonus: There was something fishy about the barbecue purchased by Drs. Denise Gomez and her husband, Sam Poniachik, in the auction at Friday's North County Health Services Fore for Kids V golf tournament.

But that was a good thing. Along with the barbecue, the couple received about 20 pounds of fresh ahi tuna caught by Dr. Kenneth Morris, the agency's associate medical director for pediatrics, and the co-auctioneer with radio personality Mike V.

Also profiting from the auction were retired development director Victor Botello and his wife, Judy, who landed a good price for a pair of Southwest Airlines tickets they can use to travel to their son's wedding in New York City.

The team of Jim Andrews, Matt Christensen, Steve Heirshal and Rory Smith from Ameriprise claimed first place in the tournament at Lake San Marcos Country Club. Community development coordinator Michelle Davis got a surprise presentation of flowers and a chorus of "happy birthday" from dinner guests.

Having a ball: The late Harold Carpenter will be honored at the 26th annual Heritage Ball, benefiting Mission San Luis Rey. The owner of Carpenter's Towing was a longtime supporter of the mission and its programs. A vintage tow truck will be displayed during the 6 p.m. Saturday event, which will also feature a martini bar under the mission's pepper tree, sponsored by Carpenter's family. Dinner, music by the Society Beat Orchestra, a reception in the Sacred Garden and a raffle for a dinner for six at the mission's old well house will keep the fun going for the 225 guests. Call 760-757-3651, ext. 3651.

Affair of state: By midday Friday, a fair percentage of Carlsbad residents should be well acquainted with the state of affairs in their city. Some 500 of them will pack the ballroom at the Four Seasons Resort Aviara for the State of the City Luncheon. It's the biggest turnout yet, said Angela Holman, spokeswoman for the hosting Chamber of Commerce. "This is the first year we're at the limit and have a waiting list," she noted. A video featuring city leaders and issues they will face will highlight the event, which is sold out.

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