



PRESS RELEASE

March 26, 2026

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Sold-Out Mission Creek Gala Raises Record Support for Museum

- The Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History welcomed 210 guests to its sold-out 26th Annual Mission Creek Gala, Revealing the Colors of Nature, celebrating the vibrancy of the natural world while supporting education and science programs.
- An immersive, colorful experience transformed Fleischmann Auditorium with large-scale nature imagery, dynamic lighting, and five sponsored tableaux inspired by colors found in nature.
- The evening program highlighted scientific research, youth voices from the Quasars to Sea Stars program, and a powerful appeal that raised \$386,000 on the spot.
- The gala raised a total of \$741,000 to support the Museum's mission and education programs serving more than 10,000 schoolchildren each year.

SANTA BARBARA, CA— The Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History welcomed 210 guests on Saturday, March 21, for its 26th Annual Mission Creek Gala: Revealing the Colors of Nature. The sold-out event celebrated the vibrancy of the natural world while raising essential support for the Museum's education and science programs.

The evening began with a lively courtyard reception featuring interactive stations led by teens from the Museum's Quasars to Sea Stars internship program. Guests enjoyed a signature cocktail—The Chameleon—and a selection of delicious bites provided by duo catering & events, creating a festive atmosphere that set the tone for the night.

When doors opened to Fleischmann Auditorium, attendees stepped into a stunningly transformed space. Giant LED screens displayed immersive images of nature, surrounding guests with color and movement. Images were provided by Larry Friesen, Ph.D. The visionary environment, crafted by Joy Full Events, Inc., SMI Audio Visual, and Hogue & Co., invited guests into a world where the brilliance of natural color took center stage. Adding to the ambience were five spectacular tableaux, each sponsored with exceptional generosity. Designed as individual vignettes inspired by pink, purple, red, orange, and yellow, the installations paid tribute to colors found in nature.

Museum Board Chair Matt Adams welcomed guests and introduced an engaging program. A seasonal four-course dinner from duo catering & events followed, beginning with a spring garden asparagus salad, herbed chicken medallions, and a petit filet, concluding with a decadent white-chocolate-covered



chocolate cake. With each course, the room's lighting and imagery shifted to reflect the color theme of the dish, ending in a vibrant rainbow for dessert.

During one course, Museum staff Curator of Mammalogy Ally Coconis, Ph.D., Associate Curator of Invertebrate Zoology Vanessa Delnavaz, M.A., and Schlinger Chair of Entomology Alex Harman, Ph.D. shared fascinating, colorful insights drawn from their research fields. Later, Quasars to Sea Stars program participant Diego Rodriguez delivered a heartfelt message about the Museum's impact on his life and future. Museum President & CEO Luke J. Swetland then took the stage to make an appeal, inspiring immediate support and raising \$386,000 on the spot.

Eleven Napa Valley wineries generously donated wine for the event, contributing to a memorable culinary experience. In total, the Mission Creek Gala raised \$741,000 in support of the Museum's mission to inspire a thirst for discovery and a passion for the natural world.

Guests concluded the evening with a late-night bite in the Courtyard Gallery before departing in high spirits. The Museum extends deep gratitude to the Gala Committee, whose leadership and support helped make the event a tremendous success. The Gala Committee consisted of Stacey Byers, Sheri Eckmann, Venesa Faciane, Lucy Firestone, Elisabeth Fowler, Heather Hambleton, Ken Kelly, Amanda Lee, Bobbie Kinnear, Jackie McBride, Karen Nicholson, and Susan Parker.

The Museum aims to spark curiosity and ignite a passion for nature, and maintains a commitment to providing exceptional educational programs for the Santa Barbara community. The Mission Creek Gala sustains the Museum's outstanding nature and science education programs, touching the lives of thousands of schoolchildren each year through school field trips, camps and classes, and other programs at the Museum and its sister campus, the Sea Center on Stearns Wharf.

Since its inaugural year in 2000, the annual Mission Creek Gala has raised more than eight million dollars for the Museum's school programs. One of the most remarkable programs supported by the event is the Museum Access Fund (MAF), a scholarship program provided by the Museum to visiting school groups in need of financial assistance. Title I schools (with a 50% or greater enrollment in the federal Free or Reduced-Price Meal Program) are eligible to visit the Museum and enjoy a field trip program for just \$50. With the help of generous donors, the Museum is expanding the number of schools covered by the program.

Visit sbnature.org for more information about the Museum and how to support its programs.

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About the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History

Powered by Science. Inspired by Nature. Founded in 1916, the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History inspires a thirst for discovery and a passion for the natural world. The Museum seeks to connect people to nature for the betterment of both, and prides itself on being *naturally different*. For more information, visit sbnature.org.

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President & CEO Luke J. Swetland with Vanessa Delnavaz, M.A., Alex Harman, Ph.D., Ally Coconis, Ph.D., and Events Manager Aly Warner. Photo by Baron Spafford

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Longtime Gala supporters John Kinnear and Museum Trustee Bobbie Kinnear
Photo by Baron Spafford

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Sheri Eckmann and Francie Lufkin
Photo by Baron Spafford



Stacey Byers from Robertson Travel and Luke Swetland announcing the raffle winner with an image by Larry Friesen in the background. Photo by Baron Spafford

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Bob and Gail Young with Museum Honorary Trustee Palmer Jackson and his wife Susan
Photo by Baron Spafford



Guests were invited to wear white or their favorite color to help the colors of the room pop.
Photo by Baron Spafford

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Gala committee members Sheri Eckmann, Stacey Byers, Jackie McBride, Bobbie Kinnear, Tamara Jensen, Heather Hambleton, Caroline Baker, and Lucy Firestone. Photo by Baron Spafford