

Organizers dole out events' take

Two wine festivals garnered \$8 million

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An event that offered magic lessons with David Blaine, among other auction prizes, is working almost \$8 million worth of magic in Southwest Florida.

The Naples Winter Wine Festival, which took place in January, gave checks to 22 charities at a ceremony Sunday at the Naples Botanical Garden.

Other initiatives aimed at fighting hunger, addressing behavioral health and increasing early learning programs also received checks, according to a news release.

For the 11th consecutive year, guests who paid to attend the auction and wine dinners at private homes bid on such items as a 1956 red Corvette, a 2011 Lexus hardtop convertible, an African safari and a trip to the Super Bowl.

Through the nonprofit Naples Children & Education Foundation, the result included checks ranging from \$25,000, to St. Matt's Camps for Kids Program, to \$1 million for the Boys & Girls Club of Collier County.

"Thanks to the generosity of festival supporters, we are providing a medical, academic and social

safety net" to the children of Collier County, said Bruce Sherman, who helmed the 2011 festival along with his wife, Cynthia.

Tickets to the auction alone cost \$7,500 per couple.

That money will pay for a playground at the Immokalee Child Care Center, pay therapists at Catholic Charities, for those recovering from sexual assault and abuse, educate young children at the Guadalupe Center and provide lunches for needy children through a mobile pantry.

The 2011 grants put the wine festival total charitable donations at more than \$90 million.

"I hope we launch a new decade with a great success so we give a lot of long legs to the Naples Winter Wine Festival," Cynthia Sherman said shortly after the festival's auctions.

Organizers of The Southwest Florida Wine & Food Fest, which took place in February, will present a \$1.25 million check to The Children's Hospital on Wednesday at HealthPark in Fort Myers.

The money will go toward five Giraffe bed incubators for the hospital's neonatal intensive care unit.

This year's event netted approximately \$1.6 million, a 60 percent increase over 2010.

WHERE THE MONEY GOES

The charities that received checks Sunday:

- Able Academy: \$185,000
- Boys & Girls Club of Collier County: \$1 million
- Catholic Charities: \$125,000
- The Children's Hospital of Southwest Florida: \$150,000
- Collier Child Care Resources Inc.: \$175,000
- Children's Advocacy Center of Collier County/CPT: \$460,000
- Eden Florida: \$150,000
- Early Literacy and Learning Model Program: \$350,000
- Friends of Foster Children of Southwest Florida: \$300,000
- Fun Time Early Childhood Academy: \$120,000
- Guadalupe Center of Immokalee: \$732,000
- Immokalee Child Care Center: \$287,000
- Immokalee Housing & Family Services: \$40,000
- Greater Marco Family YMCA: \$200,000
- Naples Equestrian Challenge Inc.: \$60,000
- Redlands Christian Migrant Association (RCMA): \$280,000
- The Shelter for Abused Women & Children: \$320,000
- Southwest Florida Workforce Development Board Inc.: \$337,000
- St. Matthew's House/St. Matt's Camps for Kids Program: \$25,000
- Tutor Corps: \$63,000
- VisionQuest: \$61,000
- YMCA of the Palms: \$400,000
- Collier H.U.G.S. (Health Under Guided Systems): \$1.05 million
- Immokalee Early Learning Initiative: \$460,000
- Lunch Boxes of Love (fighting childhood hunger): \$630,000