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Naples Winter Wine Festival Brings in \$12.2 Million

With some help from Haut-Brion, America's top charity wine auction raises cash for kids

By Lizzie Munro

Good things came by the dozen at the nation's top charity wine auction, the Naples Winter Wine Festival, this year. Auction-goers celebrated the event's 12-year anniversary Jan. 28 at the Ritz-Carlton Golf Resort in Naples, Fla., and raised \$12.2 million for the Naples Children & Education Foundation. The celebration also marked a milestone, as this year's funds contributed to a grand total of \$106.7 million raised since the event's inception in 2001.

Almost 600 guests attended Saturday night's auction and watched 67 lots sell for prices ranging from \$32,000 to \$1.2 million. The top-selling lot was a private concert with Grammy-award winner LeAnn Rimes held at a Naples beachfront estate, accompanied by dinner prepared by chef Tom Colicchio, which captured multiple bids. The top wine lot, donated by this year's honored vintner, Prince Robert of Luxembourg, president of his family's Bordeaux estates, including Château Haut-Brion, consisted of eight rare bottles of Haut-Brion from 1935, 1945, 1959, 1961, 1975, 1989, 1990 and 2009, and six bottles each from the 2010 vintage of Haut-Brion Blanc and Rouge. The lot sold twice, at \$550,000 each.

Many attendees also participated in the festival's vintner dinners, which welcomed 17 celebrity chefs, including Wolfgang Puck and Tony Mantuano, as well as a dozen of the country's top sommeliers, such as Chris Miller of Spago Beverly Hills and Ian Cauble of the French Laundry.

This spring, funds raised during the auction will help support more than 20 charitable programs serving underprivileged and at-risk children in Collier County. Next year's festival will be held Jan. 25-27.