PHILANTHROPY

By Kim Stemper | philanthropy@ocbj.com

Miracle of the Mission

▶ *(L to R) Miracle of Mobility event committee members: Ramon Gonzalez, consultant relations, business development, William Blair; Mike Allen, vice president, Citizens Private Bank; Nate Kuchera, senior mortgage advisor/construction loan consultant, Arbor Financial Group; Wendy Isbell, volunteer, Free Wheelchair Mission; Mitch Hughes, senior institutional consultant, Beacon Pointe Advisors; Lauren Jolliffe-Miklinski, volunteer, Free Wheelchair Mission; Felix Lin, senior advisor, Beacon Pointe Advisors*

Free Wheelchair Mission, which has distributed more than 1.5 million wheelchairs worldwide since its inception in 2001, recently concluded its 22nd annual **Miracle of Mobility** event series, raising $2.3 million to provide free wheelchairs to 24,000 individuals with disabilities in developing countries.

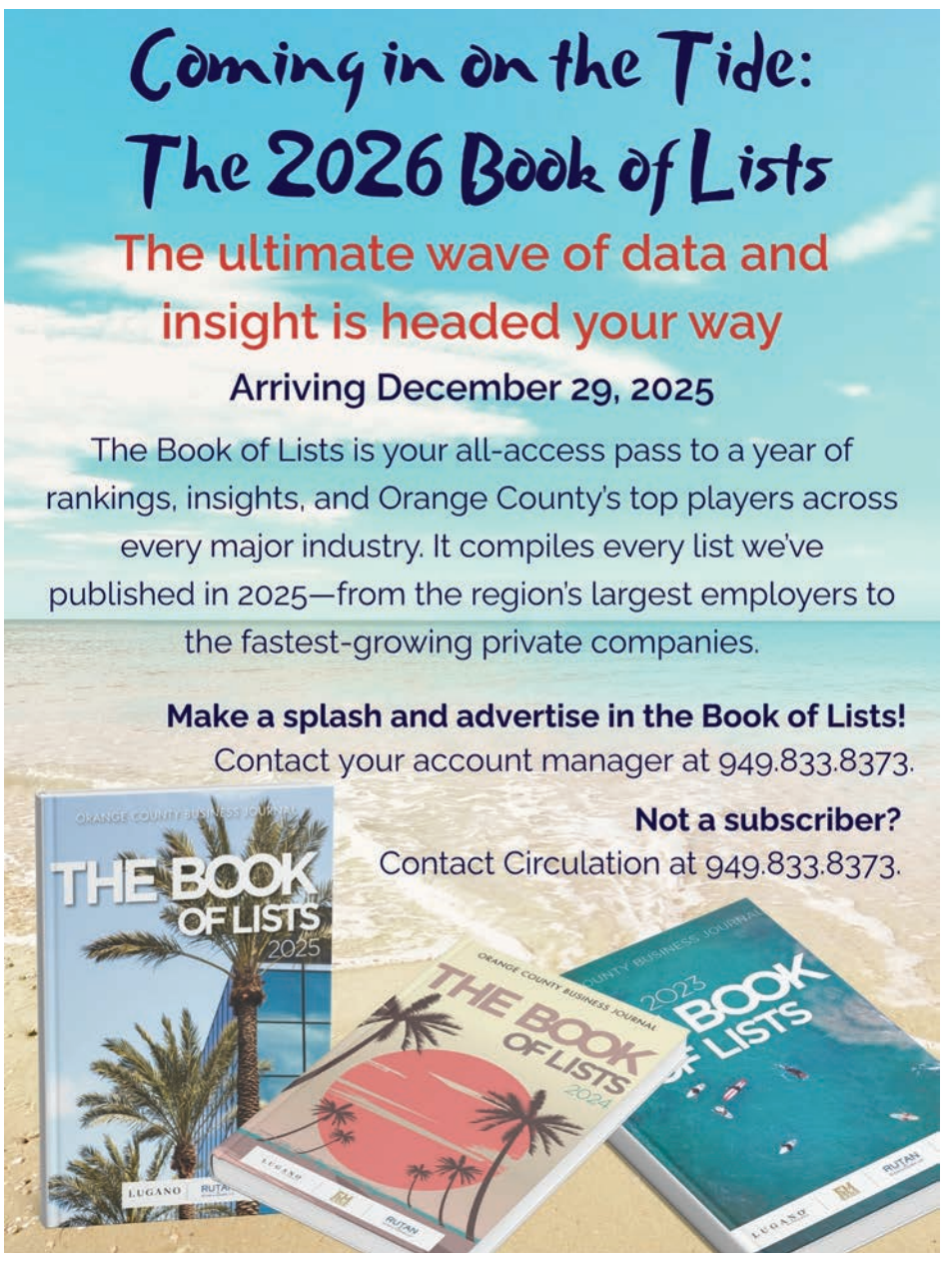
The funds were raised between September and October through a series of in-person and virtual gatherings. Orange County's Miracle of Mobility gala took place on Sept. 4 at the **Segerstrom Center for the Arts** in Costa Mesa. The event also marked the debut of Free Wheelchair Mission's new **GEN 4 JOY** wheelchair, a breakthrough design that provides an even more durable, comfortable and cost-efficient model.

A virtual Miracle of Mobility event took place on Sept. 21, featuring a live music performance by the Grammy award-winning group **For King & Country**, which drew hundreds of thousands of viewers from around the world.

A third Miracle of Mobility event took place in Seattle on Oct. 11.

"We are incredibly grateful for the generosity of everyone who joined us for Miracle of Mobility, whether in Orange County, Seattle, or virtually," said **Nuka Hart**, CEO, Free Wheelchair Mission. This year's Miracle of Mobility events drew more than 600 in-person attendees and over 500,000 people viewed the virtual event.

Local sponsors included **F&M Bank**, **Applied Medical**, **Access Home Lending**, **TriGuard**, **Beacon Pointe Advisors** and **Murphy, Murphy & Murphy Inc.**



The Wish Kids are the Stars

▶ *Jeff Lewis, executive vice president, U.S. Bank, chair, board of directors, Make-A-Wish OCIE; Anne Grey, president, CEO, Make-A-Wish OCIE; Dolores Salman, global head, environmental, health & safety, Netflix Inc., member, board of directors, Make-A-Wish OCIE, Gala co-chair; Dr. George Salman, family medicine, Kaiser Permanente, Gala co-chair*

Make-A-Wish Orange County and the Inland Empire (MAWOCIE) raised nearly $700,000 at **The Wish Gala**, a black-tie affair held on Oct. 18 at the **Balboa Bay Resort** in Newport Beach. The evening brought together 250 guests for a night of fine dining, inspiring stories and generosity, all to help grant life-changing wishes for children with critical illnesses.

This year's theme, Hope, Strength & Joy in Every Star, celebrated the resilience of Wish Kids and the impact of receiving their Wish. The evening included a cocktail reception, silent and live auctions, a gourmet dinner and inspiring stories from former and current Wish Kids who shared how Wishes impacted their lives.

The evening also honored donors, including longtime partner **Yuhaaviatam of San Manuel Nation** for their unwavering dedication to making Wishes a reality.

Sponsors, including **CHOC**, **RJ Mayer**, **Lugano**, **Capital Group**, **U.S. Bank**, **Allied Universal**, **Disneyland Resorts**, **The Baldwin Group**, **Langan** and **GoCal**, helped make the evening a success.

Power of the Wardrobe

▶ *(L to R) Bonni Pomush, chief executive officer, Working Wardrobes; Shari Battle, senior vice president and market executive, Bank of America Orange County*

Working Wardrobes marked its 35th anniversary with the **Power of One Gala** at the **Renaissance Newport Beach** on Sept. 20, honoring its late founder, **Jerri Rosen**, and celebrating the organization's legacy of helping people overcome barriers to meaningful employment by providing career navigation services, leadership training, job search strategies and professional wardrobes. The evening brought together community leaders, supporters and program alumni for a night that included silent and live auctions, gourmet dining and inspirational presentations from former and current Working Wardrobe clients. That gala raised nearly $400,000.

Power of One Gala sponsors included **U.S. Bank**, **Optum**, **Bank of America**, **Leaderology**, **KPMG**, **Sunwest Bank**, **JPMorgan Chase**, **H&H Lee Charitable Foundation**, **AAA**, **Apriem Advisors**, **Ingram Micro** and **Windsor**.

The event also introduced new members of the **Suit Society**, recognizing honorees whose leadership exemplifies generosity and empowerment, including **Shari Battle**, senior vice president and market executive, Bank of America Orange County; **Matt Clark**, senior vice president, **PIMCO**; **Rhonda Ducote**, president, Apriem Advisors; **Chris Newman**, senior vice president, employee benefits, HUB International; and **Mark Pomerantz**, founder and chief designer, **Mark Pomerantz Menswear**.

"For 35 years, Working Wardrobes has proven that the power of one act, one opportunity, and one connection can change everything," said **Bonni Pomush**, chief executive officer, Working Wardrobes. "This year's gala was not only a celebration of our history but also a reminder of what is possible when people use their influence for good. Our Suit Society Honorees reflect that spirit. Their leadership represents the heart of our mission and shows how one person's action can transform lives and communities."

Bits & Pieces

Dawn Reese, CEO, **The Wooden Floor**, is being named Outstanding Nonprofit Leader of 2025 by **National Philanthropy Day Orange County/Association of Fundraising Professionals**, which will be given on **National Philanthropy Day's 40th Anniversary** on Nov. 13 and honors an individual who has demonstrated exceptional leadership and vision in advancing the mission of a nonprofit…**Hanley Investment Group Real Estate Advisors** has launched its 15th annual Movember fundraising campaign, Mo'ments in Time, in honor of the company's 20th anniversary, continuing its tradition of supporting men's health through the **Movember Foundation**, for which it has raised $400,000 since 2011 … **The Richard Nixon Foundation** announced on Oct. 19 that it had received a $1 million gift from **Shaun** and **Leland Smith**, founders of **Service Champions Plumbing, Heating & Air Conditioning**, in support of the **American Civics Campaign**, the foundation's national initiative dedicated to strengthening civics education and preparing the next generation of informed and engaged citizens.