

Community signs on to help with Project SMILE

BY BUE MASON
STAFF WRITER

For Mary Martin, her ties to St. Mary Hospital are as long as they are strong. She worked there "when the hospital was new."

"I have a deep loyalty to St. Mary's," she said. "I was a lab technician and Slater (Mary Modesta) was my boss."

A member of the hospital Community Advisory Board, she helped with the hospital's Health Day last spring and says "it was a natural" to sign on to Project SMILE's "Hollywood Nights III" Community Committee.

The committee members' backgrounds are varied. A banker, Realtor, volunteer and photographer are using their talents to sell advertising, line up sponsors, promote ticket sales and even plan the table seating for the benefit.

For many, the common denominator for their involvement is Project SMILE's founder, Carol Casale. For others, it's a way of giving back to the community where they live and work.

For John Landis, who also will be master of ceremonies at the Oct. 19 gala, there's a simpler reason for being involved.

"It's because I can't say no to these people," said Landis with a laugh. "It just rounds out what I've done over the years."

Readily identified for his work with the Livonia Chamber of Commerce, Landis has a longtime affiliation with the Felician Sisters, first at Madonna University, then at Marian Village and Ladywood High School.

Landis has been involved with "Hollywood Nights" since its first year and was responsible for lining up Ladywood High School students to play screaming fans when the look-alikes arrived at Laurel Manor.

With the look-alikes back by popular demand, Landis is looking for possible sponsors so the students can enjoy more of the evening rather than leaving once the screaming stops.

"We had about 15 girls and they really played their part well," he said of the first group that included his daughter. "But they had to leave when they really wanted to stay."

New addition

The 24-member committee is a new addition to the "Hollywood Nights" lineup. Under the tutelage of Sherri Fletcher, the hospital's director of volunteers and fund-raising, they get hints on who to approach for sponsorships, kudos for successes and pointers on who to sell tickets to.

"If you have friends on the east side, ask them," she told members at a recent meeting. "Johnny Trudell has a big following on the east side."

Johnny Trudell and his All

Star Orchestra will share the stage with headliner Alexander Zanjic and vocalists Sandra Mandella and Sam Leortchic as the entertainment, while Jacobson's Laurel Park Place store will provide dinner fashions.

"If you have a good product to sell, it's easy to sell," said Realtor Rose Day, one of the members recruited by Casale. "This is a great group and it's nice to be involved with people you associate with in the business community and pull together in another way."

Like Day, Mary McLeod, an associate broker, finds the volunteer work a way of giving back. Another Casale recruit, McLeod had twice worked with her on the Women's Council of Realtors fashion show.

"I live in Livonia, I work in Livonia, and this is a way of giving something back to Livonia," she said. "And with this, you get to meet other people in the community and I think you have fun when you're working for a community purpose."

A third Casale recruit is Bruce Rosenblatt, the vice-president of DMR Financial Services Inc., who says the committee's job isn't a challenge. People intermingle with their jobs and the volunteer work becomes a part of the daily regime, he said.

Self-fulfilling

"It's very self-fulfilling," said Rosenblatt, "and absolutely, it's been fun."

But the secret to the committee's success seems to lie with Casale. Her recruits are quick to point out her way of getting peo-

ple involved and making them feel good about what they do.

"Carol has a way of asking that makes you want to do it," said McLeod, echoing Rosenblatt. "When Carol calls and asks if you want to be involved with something, you ask where and when."

"Carol's approach is to minimize things, she has a pacifying approach," he added. "And in that rare opportunity when she comes to you and asks for your assistance, you say yes."

Photographer Ron Reck also said yes to serving on the commit-

tee and doing photographic work for the benefit. His photographs of the previous "Hollywood Nights" are being showcased in the several corridors at St. Mary Hospital.

Reck has taken more than 1,000 photographs of the event as well as photographs of the doctors appearing in the doctor's directory given out at the benefit.

"It sounded like a lot of fun, and it's been a blast," Reck said. "I figured this is my way of bringing up the image of St. Mary Hospital."

Tickets are on sale now on a first-come, first-served basis. They are priced at \$75 per person or \$750 per table of 10 for VIP seating (special seating, dinner, the show and afterglow) or \$35 per person or \$350 per table of 10 for guest seating (guest seating, dinner and the show).

To order, send a check, payable to St. Mary Hospital Foundation, to St. Mary Hospital Foundation — Project SMILE, 36475 Five Mile Road, Livonia. For more information, call (313) 591-2080.

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