

**WomenShelter of Long Beach  
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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**WomenShelter of Long Beach Gala Celebration:  
*It's a New Day...It's a Fresh Start...It's a Safe Home!***

A gala celebration held on April 25, 2018 at the Pacific Gallery downtown attracted more than 300 supporters to celebrate WomenShelter of Long Beach's opening of their new emergency shelter serving victims of domestic violence. The new shelter will be called Chereese's Safe Home.

Setting the evening's theme of "It's a New Day... It's a Fresh Start... It's a Safe Home!" Rita Castillo sang "Feeling Good" by Nina Simone. Cool jazz fusion music was provided by 4 Level Interchange. WSLB Board Vice President Freeman Welch did his usual great job as Master of Ceremonies.

The Protector Award was given by Councilman Al Austin to Supervisor Janice Hahn for her legislative work in protecting victims of domestic violence, including H.R. 897, which expanded the definition of "homeless veteran" to include those fleeing domestic violence.

Actress Wendi McLendon-Covey of "The Goldbergs" fame and her husband Greg Covey received the Philanthropist Award, which was presented by WSLB Board member Freeman Welch. Wendi and Greg received this honor because of their ongoing generosity and support of the WomenShelter, including donating Wendi's winnings and appearance fee from her guest appearance on "Celebrity Jeopardy." Greg accepted the award on behalf of the couple, as Wendi was regrettably called away to film a movie in Atlanta, Georgia.

WSLB Board member Dr. Carol Grabowski lovingly presented the Legacy Award on behalf of Chereese Mari Laulhere, in memoriam, to Larry and Chris Laulhere. The Chereese Mari Laulhere Foundation's magnanimous donation purchased, renovated and furnished Chereese's Safe Home, bringing a new day to the many survivors served by WomenShelter of Long Beach.

Long Beach Chamber of Commerce President/CEO Randy Gordon took the stage to conduct a lively "Fund-a-Need" auction that garnered \$42,000. Add in the proceeds of the silent auction, sponsorships, opportunity drawing and the rest, the evening grossed more than \$142,000 to support WomenShelter's many programs.

"Proceeds from the event will help give our many domestic violence survivors a fresh start by enabling us to provide them with a variety of supportive services, including safe, confidential housing while they work to overcome the trauma they've been through," said WomenShelter Executive Director Mary Ellen Mitchell. "We can't thank the community and our sponsors enough for their generous support." WomenShelter's event was sponsored in part by the Long Beach Convention and Visitor's Bureau, The Long Beach Convention and Entertainment Center, the Long Beach Hospitality Alliance, AES, Supervisor Janice Hahn, Memorial Care-Long Beach Medical Center/Miller Children's and Women's Hospital Long Beach, Toyota-TABC, Inc., and the San Antonio Winery.

The evening closed with WSLB Board President Kristi Fischer presenting WomenShelter's eloquent Youth Ambassador, Ellis Sanchez, the WomenShelter's "Opportunities Abound" Scholarship. The presentation was followed by the drawing of the name of the winner of the Opportunity Drawing. Ms. Claire McLeod was the lucky winner of a fabulous Hawaiian vacation.

**About WSLB:**

The mission of WSLB is to eliminate domestic violence through compassionate intervention, education and personal empowerment. Since 1977, WomenShelter of Long Beach has helped thousands of families overcome the trauma caused by domestic abuse. WSLB is a federally recognized 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization – Federal Tax ID #95-1644058.