

‘Happy to be back’: La Jolla Community center hosts ‘Summer Soiree’

By ELISABETH FRAUSTO STAFF WRITER

About 65 people gathered at the La Jolla Community Center the evening of June 25 for a “Summer Soiree,” the center’s first large in-person gathering since the COVID-19 pandemic began.

Community Center members and guests ate from individually wrapped charcuterie plates from local shop Smallgoods and heard remarks from LJCC Executive Director Nancy Walters, all without masks outdoors or screens between them.

Local performer Gizeh Guevara played for the crowd, while LJCC board members sold raffle tickets and encouraged those attending to bid on silent-auction items.

The center, which closed its doors in March 2020 due to the pandemic, reopened June 15 for a limited offering of classes.

“So far, so good,” Walters said of the reopening. “Everyone’s happy to be back.”

“Some members came up to me and they said, ‘I got so emotional just doing a yoga class and looking out in the courtyard,’” Walters said. “They would come here at least three to five times a week to do so. And it’s been so long since they’ve been able to do that.”

For the soiree, as with all current LJCC activities, proof of COVID-19 vaccination was required for entrance, with masks required inside the building and capacity limited.

Though the state lifted capacity limits and most mask mandates June 15, Walters said the center will maintain its restrictions “at the moment ... just because of the demographic we serve” (adults and senior citizens).

In her remarks at the soiree, Walters expressed gratitude to those in attendance for their continuing support of the center.



La Jolla Community Center marketing director Barbara Graf, Executive Director Nancy Walters and administrative assistant Deborah Miller (from left) attend the center’s “Summer Soiree” on June 25. (Elisabeth Frausto)



“How members feel when they walk in the door is nothing short of wonderful,” Executive Director Nancy Walters said of the La Jolla Community Center at its “Summer Soiree.” (Elisabeth Frausto)

“Over the last 15 months, we hosted over 300 free classes, 50 special events and concerts, provided meals and resources for seniors and consistently reached out to our senior community,” she said. “We could not have done it without you.”

“How members feel when they walk in the door is nothing short of wonderful,” Walters said. “I recently heard that if you do what you love and love what you work with, it can be like heaven on Earth, and that is exactly how I feel.”

Soiree attendee Ralph Lundberg said Walters is “the glue” of the Community Center. “She is a very effective person.”

Effie Krebs-Lundberg said Walters brought the center “back to life. ... She makes everybody feel like they’re part of this community. And that’s really important for older people.”

Lucy Hodges said LJCC is made special by its community. “There are awfully nice people here,” she said. “Everybody wants to help you.”

Ruth Yansick, LJCC’s chief executive, said having members return to the center in person feels “terrific.”

“It’s a good response,” she said. “People are anxious to get back.”

Yansick said LJCC has many events planned for the near future, such as a John Cain Trio concert on Saturday, July 31, and a series of bridge classes beginning Monday, July 5.

She said she has missed “functions like this,” gesturing at the soiree. “The music ... it’s a perfect evening.”

Nicole Caulfield said she was happy to be back in person, though her “time on Zoom was not devastating,” mostly because of the “lovely relationships” fostered by the many LJCC online classes during the pandemic.

“There was an upside to having that time,” she said.

For more information about the La Jolla Community Center, visit ljcommunitycenter.org. ♦



About 65 people gathered for the La Jolla Community Center’s “Summer Soiree” on June 25. The center is keeping capacity limits and indoor mask requirements for now. (Elisabeth Frausto)