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NORTHERN CALIFORNIA'S LARGEST NEWSPAPER

Rockin' and rollin' for Mills-Peninsula Hospital

Catherine Bigelow

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Arriving at the brand-sparkling-new Mills-Peninsula Hospital in Burlingame on Jan. 22, **Sheila McWilliams** noted, "It's so pretty, it feels like you're at a luxury hotel."

Well, for \$618 million and the latest in earthquake-proof, base-isolation technology, nothing less should be expected from the six-story, 450,000-square-foot facility that will house 241 private patient rooms and features 10 operating rooms, nuclear medicine services *and* a meditation center.

To celebrate this milestone, the hospital foundation welcomed deep-pocketed donors to the Rock & Roll Gala in advance of the hospital's official April opening.

Some 200 black-tie clad guests excitedly toured the new facility between bites from a copious McCall Associates cocktail buffet that carried over in a tricked-out tent featuring **Jonathan Poretz** & a Swing-ing Night at the Sands.

"Many people ask, 'When are you moving in?' And that's a very good question," CEO **Bob Merwin** said with a laugh. "Once the state and fire marshal sign off, we'll train 2,500 employees on 125 new systems."

The gala raised \$400K in support of a new building fund. But it was hospital employees who first pitched in, donating one hour of pay from their weekly paychecks for the past three years. Many even doubled their contribution.

"I've worked here for 22 years - 27 if you count my years as a candy striper," Aquatics & Fitness Center manager **Christina Sullivan** explained. "I've had surgery here, given birth to my children here and met my husband, **Kevin**, here. Mills-Peninsula Hospital is home."

In the kitchen: The one recession-proof industry in our fair city may well be our dynamic and delicious food scene.

And to assist those transitioning out of homelessness and halfway houses, Pacific Waterfront Partners **Simon Snellgrove** and **Alicia Esterkamp Allbin** hosted a progressive dining experience Tuesday along the restaurant row they developed between Lafitte, La Mar and Plant Cafe in support of their new partnership with CHEFS (Conquering Homelessness Through Employment in Food Service).

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CHEFS is also rife with talented local toques (1300 Fillmore chef **David Lawrence**, Kuleto chef **Bob Helstrom**, author-chef **Tori Ritchie**) who volunteer their time and culinary know-how at the CHEFS SoMa facility on Natoma Street.

"Our students prepare lunch every day for our visiting restaurateurs and lecturers," said Taylor, who spent 50 years in the industry. "You might say we run the most exclusive restaurant in town."

Chronicle society correspondent Catherine Bigelow's columns appear Wednesday in Datebook, Sunday in Style and at SFGate.com. E-mail her at missbigelow@sfgate.com.



Simon Snellgrove (left), Lafitte chef Russell Jackson and Alicia Esterkamp Allbin at CHEFS party.

Photo: Catherine Bigelow / Special to The Chronicle