

St. James' celebrates 40th anniversary on April 26

By Melanie Mulligan

Every school has to have one foot firmly planted in the traditions of the past, and the other in its hopes for the future. For the past 40 years, St. James' Episcopal School, 625 S. St. Andrews Place, has dedicated itself to serving students of varying economic, ethnic, racial and social backgrounds, from kindergarten through grade six, by offering a strong academic program grounded in the Christian faith.

On Sat., April 26, the salons and gardens of the historic Ebell Club of Los Angeles will be the setting for the school's 40th anniversary celebration, as friends of St. James' reflect on the past and celebrate the next 40 years of this neighborhood school. The "black tie optional" evening will include a hosted reception bar, dinner, short video and presentation on the history of the school, a live auction and dancing.

After all the months of preparation and planning, no one has more reason to celebrate than head of school Stephen Bowers, who predicted a capacity crowd of 400, adding "I am honored to be head of St. James' Episcopal School at this important time in its history."

That history began in 1968 when the Rev. Samuel D'Amico founded the school as a ministry of St. James' Episcopal Church, with the hope of providing quality education for families in the parish neighborhood. Rev. D'Amico's big dream started small: the first class consisted of one teacher and four students in a small room just big enough to hold them.

The original school building on Gramercy Place was donated by St. James' parishioner Joseph DeBell; in 1981, St. James' moved to its current location on St. Andrews Place, reaching its full capacity of 308 students in 1984.

Many of the individuals who played important roles in the

school's history are expected to crowd into the Ebell Club on April 26, coming from all around the state, and the east coast. Among the invitees is Samuel D'Amico, the school's founder, who lives in Orange County. Other guests include former and present faculty, parents, staff, administrators, trustees, parishioners, and alumni over the age of 21.

Lynn Leipzig and Joy McManus co-chair the celebration committee, which, in honor of the anniversary, consists of 40 volunteers. Emcees at the gathering will include current school parents Andy Richter, Annabelle Gurwitch and Mariah O'Brien. Keith Edgehill, cousin of fifth grade teacher Mrs. Dessie Jeffries, will be the deejay.

While Keith rocks the house to celebrate four decades of

academic accomplishment, partygoers will be invited to look into their hearts and their wallets to pave the way for St. James' next 40 years. Bowers hopes that they'll be inspired by the generous example of school parents Marilyn and John Wells, who

have offered a challenge gift of \$500,000 with the intention of providing financial assistance to families who are unable to afford the annual tuition. This is an important goal in an institution which prides itself on having a student body as diverse as Los Angeles itself. "So

many schools are looking for diversity, and we actually have it!" Mr. Bowers exults proudly. "You won't find a more warm and welcoming place."

With traditions worth honoring, and a future filled with promise, St. James' Episcopal School has its feet planted just where they're supposed to be: right here in our community.

Photo page one.



THE FIRST ST. JAMES' SCHOOL kindergarten class in 1968. The school will celebrate its 40th year at a gala on Sat., April 26.

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