



Photos and more from Evening for Autism

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I'll have a slideshow up soon, along with final figures from An Evening for Autism, the mega fundraiser at Barry Saywitz' Newport Beach home Saturday. Here's a small taste:

Hundreds of partygoers were dressed for a tropical party as the rain began falling Saturday night. Not to worry, the party's host told them.

"We do have a rain contingency," real-estate businessman Barry Saywitz told the crowd. "If it does rain, don't do anything – just go to the bar and get another drink. It's on me."

Saywitz hosted more than 600 people for An Evening for Autism, a fund-raiser in his nearly 10,000-square-foot Newport Beach home. There were a half-dozen restaurants catering, hundreds of auction items, free shoe shining and massages and three live bands playing reggae and classic rock that echoed across several blocks.

Saywitz' own son was diagnosed with autism two years ago, and Saywitz wanted to throw a party for the support groups and educators who have helped Ryan, now 4, overcome learning and communication struggles.

Turning serious, he told the crowd Saturday: "These children with autism are at home and they have trouble communicating, trouble learning, trouble in so many ways. But tonight they don't have trouble with friends. You are now a friend to an autistic child."

I'll also found out that TACA's Lisa Ackerman was successful in her bid to buy Wheel of Fortune tickets in the silent auction. She was in a major bidding war with her father. And Vanessa Showalter, who was doing press for the party, writes that three pieces of artwork by Ryan Saywitz (the 4-year-old who inspired the autism benefit) all sold, and now there is a waiting list for his future works.

All in all, about \$200,000 raised.

