

Serving the Needs of Children

An Interview with Barbara Banke, Cochair, and Peggy Furth, Cochair, Sonoma Paradiso Wine Auction

EDITORS' NOTE Barbara Banke is Coproprietor of Jackson Family Wines. After earning a juris doctorate from Hastings College of Law, she practiced law for 12 years, specializing in land use and constitutional law. Her husband, Jess Jackson, founded the Kendall-Jackson Winery in 1982, and Banke joined him full-time in 1990. They grew Kendall-Jackson into an internationally known brand. In addition, the couple established several separate artisan wineries, which, along with Kendall-Jackson, are now collected under a family enterprise named Jackson Family Wines.

Peggy Furth was recently named Cochairman and CEO of Chalk Hill Estate Vineyards & Winery. Furth attended The Ohio State University and earned a BS degree in nutrition. She left graduate school to work for the Kellogg Company, where she specialized in public affairs and government relations. In 1979, Furth became the first woman to hold an officer's position at Kellogg as Vice President, Public Affairs. Peggy's interest in wine began in Kalamazoo, when she and several colleagues joined the local chapter of Les Amis du Vin and attended tastings and dinners. Furth has been involved in the winery since 1985, and has most recently focused on the Sonoma Paradiso Wine Auction and other philanthropic work.

ORGANIZATION BRIEF The Imagine Auction was founded by Barbara Banke, Jess Jackson, Peggy Furth, and Fred Furth, who wanted to focus their family foundations' philanthropy on children most in need. Both of the families' wineries, Jackson Family Wines and Chalk Hill Estate Vineyards & Winery, had deeply established relationships with the leading charitable wine auctions. Together with a group of financial sponsors and a dedicated team of volunteers, the Imagine Auction made Sonoma County history in 2004, topping \$1 million in proceeds. The auction has distributed almost \$6 million in only four years, providing essential funding to organizations that serve children in Sonoma County and the Greater Bay Area. In 2007, the event was renamed the Sonoma Paradiso Wine Auction (www.sonomaparadiso.com).

How did both of you get into the wine business, and how have your roles evolved?

Banke: I was an attorney and I practiced with my husband, Jess Jackson. He started the winery in 1982 and was having lots of fun. On



Barbara Banke



Peggy Furth

the other hand, I wasn't having any fun. So, in 1986, I decided it was time to quit law and go into wine. But it actually took me until 1990 to get out of law. At that point, I came full-time into the winery. My background was in real estate litigation, so that stood me in good stead in the wine business, because we have purchased a number of vineyards over the years, which is my favorite part of the business.

Furth: I was a corporate officer with the Kellogg Company in Battle Creek, Michigan, when I met my husband to be, Fred Furth, in 1979. In 1984, when we decided to marry and I moved to California, I would spend weekends at the Chalk Hill Winery with Fred. It was a retreat for us. As time went on, it just consumed a larger and larger portion of our lives. We began to purchase contiguous acreage and created the 1,400-acre Chalk Hill Estate of today. It became our passion and the place where I spend all my time.

What led you to create the Sonoma Paradiso Wine Auction?

Banke: It was generated by the needs of the children's charities and nonprofits in our area, which Peggy and I had always supported. A lot of them had capital projects or various other programs that needed funding, and we thought this would be a great way to help them. We had a role model in the Naples Winter Wine Festival in Florida, which is the number-one charity wine auction in the country. We have a lot of friends there, and they helped us develop our own charity auction.

Furth: Principally, the inspiration came from our local community. Barbara and I, at different times, served as board members of the Community Foundation of Sonoma County. In addition, we each have family foundations, the Jackson Family Foundation and the Furth

Family Foundation, which are actively involved in grant making.

How does the event change from year to year?

Banke: We try to change it every year, so that people who come every year don't get bored. There's always something different, and we try to keep a few surprises up our sleeves. This year, it'll be spectacular. We have great entertainment provided by David Foster, a friend who has a foundation benefiting children's charities in Canada. And the site is spectacular: The event will be held at our Stonestreet Winery in Alexander Valley, so it should be great.

Furth: We are innovative with respect to the guest experience. We've moved this into harvest time, and that's generating a lot of excitement. Some fellow cochairs and winery owners are providing Friday night dinners, so people will really see the Sonoma paradise and Napa paradise in all their glory. We continue to work through generous donors on both wine and lifestyle components, and we've been able to put together 40 auction lots and a couple of raffle items that are not to be believed. We've infused this all with a green orientation, because to be in paradise, you have to be in harmony with nature.

This event has contributed over \$6 million to children's charities in the region. Did you expect that level of success?

Banke: Yes, I think we always knew that it would work, and we're gratified to see just how well it has worked. It has been very successful for the charities. For example, the Boys & Girls Club of Windsor was building a new gymnasium and needed funding. It's very difficult to get money for capital projects from other foundations, but we were able to help. We can provide money for capital projects like this, as well as charitable programs in the area. So it has been very successful.

Furth: We measure success in terms of the ever-growing number of children who are served. So while one benchmark is the figure of \$6 million, which will grow with the auction receipts in 2008, additional benchmarks are children in need and children served. As long as there is one hungry child, one homeless child, or one abused child whose needs are not being met, Barbara and I want to encourage people to take care of our community's children. ●