

Howard Collection of Asian Art Turns 60

"Ocean Morning Sunrise," a Tea Bowl and 32 other rare and beautiful objects; a modern, white satin, brocade wedding kimono and a beautiful and dramatic red one; polished furniture and dusted display cases were readied for a special celebration at Assistance League® of Long Beach's Philanthropic Center. It doesn't seem possible, but on June 29, 2008, Howard Collection of Asian Art of Assistance League of Long Beach Philanthropic Center turned 60. Two lovely events have taken place by the committee: a cocktail party by RSVP invitation only to all Assistance League members, guests and VIPs, and an Open House, in response to the community's interest in the Asian Art in its new home at Assistance League's Philanthropic Center. (Assistance League hosts field trips to the Howard Collection for 7th grade students in the LBUSD during the school year.)

On Friday, June 20, 2008 from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m., a Wine and Cheese reception showcasing the first guest collection, "Tea Art," and honoring past Howard chairmen kicked-off this remarkable milestone. Guests signed-in on a vintage guest book created by President-Elect, Pat Reep. President Nanci Gee welcomed and thanked guests for attending this special occasion. Carolyn Bixby, Howard Collection Chairman, introduced guest exhibitors Steve Baba and J. Cummins Keck whose extensive collection of fine Japanese tea ceremony implements are on display. Featured were traditional tea wares of Korea and Japan from the 16th - 20th century along with tea implements created by North American artists Beatrice Wood, Joe Koons, Reiko Niwa Berg, Robert Fornell and Ken Ferguson. Additionally, brand new reproductions from the Howard Collection's Japanese woodblock prints were on view for the first time on the Las Hermanas Wall Walkway.

Past chairmen (of the Howard Committee and sub-committees) were introduced and honored at this event by Carolyn Bixby, Chairman. Past Chairmen attending were: Kathy DeSilva with Don; Helen Downing, Carolyn Lockhart; Shirley Lamm; Mary Lou Nicolai with Bill; Ann Exley with her daughter, Sue Crockett; Cathy McHugh with Hugh; Martha Stegan with Don; and Jean Friedrichs with Bill. Jim Keck gave a short talk about the items shown and in a touching tribute thanked the Assistance League for making this day happen. Mr. Keck emphasized the beauty of the Philanthropic Center and the hopes that it may someday challenge a young visitor to create art as beautiful or even more beautiful than the artifacts seen.

Seen at the Scene: Assistance League President Nanci with Lynn Gee; Shige Higashi of the Cultural News; Carolyn, Pat, Patrick Jr., Nicole, Claire, Brian, Christine and Liam Bixby; Pat, Tom, and Peggy Reep; Jane and Tyler Jackson; Kathy and Don DeSilva; Link with Dr. Nelson Gatov; Pam Thames; Pam Mundy; Carolyn Lockhart; Martha Stegan; Kathy Lingle; Gail and Al Morrison; Nancy Merrill; Barbara and Michael Newton; Pat Warner; Jim, Julie, and Asia Morris;, Kathleen Wedul; Dave and Bonnie Dorrans; Jan and Dale Fairbanks; Polly Strong; Linda and Doug Drummond; Meredith Medanich; Mike and Midgie Cahan; Shirley Bouch; Garry Sandlin; Adra Kober; Pam and Mike Mundy; Norma and Burt Marter; Ellie and Hank Schaffner; Shelly Barbre; Jocelyn Stanton; and Jean and Bill Friedrichs.

A Public Open House was held on Saturday, June 21, 2008 from 1:00-4:00 pm. The purpose was to share the collection with the public and in response to the many people who have called and asked to bring their friends and relatives. Docents

dressed in beautiful, embroidered silk robes of emerald, red and white strolled among attendees and were on hand to provide information or tours as requested. A raised platform featured an informal kimono demonstration presented by Mrs. Akutagawa, consultant and dresser for several films including "Memoirs of a Geisha." Madonna's embroidered red kimono that she wore in a video was on view. It was noted that Madonna would not wear an obi as she wanted to show off her flat belly! Various types of kimonos were modeled by members of Mrs. Akutagawa's LA Kimono Club, www.lakimonoclub.com. Five adorable children, ages five to 15 months, also from the kimono club modeled children's kimonos with great poise and charm.

"Tea Art" will be on view free to the public Monday through Thursday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 pm., June 23 through July 20, 2008 at Assistance League of Long Beach Philanthropic Center, 6220 East Spring St., Long Beach, CA 90815, 562-627-5650. Featured in the display are many items, antique to modern, on loan from Steve Baba and J. Cummins Keck.

FYI: Assistance League of Long Beach was chartered in 1940 and is the largest chapter of National Assistance League. Its programs include Operation School Bell®/Middle School, Orthodontic Center, Scholarships, ALa Carte, The Kids on the Block™, Howard Collection and Assault Survivor Kits®. The organization currently clothes more than 6,000 needy children in the Long Beach Unified School District each year. Assistance League of Long Beach is a nonprofit corporation whose purpose is to create a community of volunteers to identify and deliver philanthropic services.