

## **Wine auction raises \$816,000 for charities**

[HEATHER CIVIL](#)

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DESTIN — The Destin Charity Wine Auction’s second-annual fund-raiser exceeded expectations this year, and three local organizations will reap the benefits.

The auction, held April 20 and 21, raised \$816,000. Nearly half of the money will go to Children in Crisis, the Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation and the Sacred Heart Foundation.

An additional \$43,000 has been donated to the Clinton Cox Memorial fund to combat youth drug addiction.

The wine auction beat its goal of \$500,000. The event is one of the largest fund-raisers in the area, said Jen Kolar, executive director of the wine auction’s foundation.

“It was just amazing what we did,” she said.

At a ceremony Wednesday evening at the Tim Creehan Culinary Center in Miramar Beach, the Wine Auction presented checks for \$152,000 to Children in Crisis, \$140,000 to the Mattie Kelly Foundation and \$121,000 to the Sacred Heart Foundation.

Wine Auction Foundation President Lamar Conerly said at the presentation that the auction will be bigger and better next year, with a goal of \$1 million for children’s charities.

“We’re growing nationally,” he said.

The remaining funds will be used to pay operating and event costs for next year’s auction, said Todd Vucovich, who will head the Wine Auction Foundation next year.

The Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation provides resources for students in the arts, including educational outreach, in Okaloosa and Walton counties.

The Sacred Heart Foundation raises funds for Sacred Heart Health Systems.

The money donated this year to Children in Crisis will help build a children's neighborhood on Hurlburt Road in Fort Walton Beach, said Ken Hair, the organization's executive director.

The agency plans to open the neighborhood this fall for abused children in Okaloosa and Walton counties.

"This is so awesome," Hair said of the donation.

Daily News Staff Writer Heather Civil can be reached at 267-8300.