

Gala raises over \$1M for cardiac program

It was a record-breaking evening for the Kelowna General Hospital Foundation, as honorary Heart of Gold event chairs John and Maria Byland inspired the crowd to raise over \$1 million toward the completion the cardiac sciences program at KGH.

"This is an outcome that far exceeded our expectations," said Natalie Walstrom, senior projects officer with the foundation. "We knew we had a generous philanthropic community here, but this is absolutely unprecedented."

The atmosphere was festive earlier this month as guests at the Spirit Ridge Equestrian Centre dined on a meal prepared by the Okanagan Chefs Association.

When the Bylands, garden centre owners, took to the stage, the seriousness of the cause became real. John began by underscoring the urgency to be able to treat specific heart conditions in Kelowna, and the need for philanthropy to make it happen.

Last February, the Bylands went



Photo contributed

Honorary Heart of Gold Event chairs John and Maria Byland.

dancing and to dinner, as they have before. But just a few hours later, Maria was in the emergency department at KGH in full cardiac arrest.

"I've been given a second chance," said Maria. "I was very lucky to have survived the event. But I had to wait 13 days for a bed in Vancouver to treat my condition. Together, tonight, we can make a difference."

"We have made great strides on the vascular (plumbing) side of cardiology over the last several years, including the opening of the Interior Heart and Surgical Centre in 2015," noted Dr. Frank Halperin, head of cardiology at Kelowna General Hospital in his appeal. "But our goal is to have a fully functional heart program here in Kelowna, so people in our region, like Maria, don't have to wait for a bed in Vancouver or Victoria; so that the level of cardiac care provided at KGH rivals the best hospitals in the country."

— Contributed by KGH Foundation



Photo contributed

Marty Pope from Ritchie Brother Auctioneers rallies the crowd during the Heart of Gold fundraiser.



Photo contributed

The Okanagan Chefs Association brought together the region's top chefs to deliver an extraordinary dinner.