

Red Bank gets elegant for Mayor's Ball

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What makes Red Bank extraordinary, according to Mayor Pasquale Menna, is that the entire community can come out and have a good time in an elegant setting.

"That's the motto of Red Bank," Menna said. "We can do things elegantly for a good cause, but we can have fun and be serious at the same time."



Glamor, fun and good food were abundant at the first annual Mayor's Charity Ball event, held May 1 at the Oyster Point Hotel. Proceeds for the sold-out event benefited the Red Bank Public Library and the Parker Family Health Clinic.

For the black-tie-optional event, all of Red Bank's living former mayors — Judge Benedict Nicosia, Assemblyman Michael Arnone and Mayor Edward J. McKenna — were brought together in celebration of the borough's rich community and history.



"I think it's wonderful when they all get along together," Menna said. "After a few drinks, it's amazing."

Council members, borough officials and residents filled the second floor of the hotel, with many of them — such as Councilman Edward Zipprich — saying they were enjoying the scene, but also recognizing its importance in helping two borough organizations.

"The money is going to two very worthy causes," said Zipprich. "Everybody is hoping that this is going to be the inaugural launch for many [events] to come to help as many organizations throughout the town as we can in the future. It's very exciting, and we're very happy that the mayor was able to kick this one off." Mayor Pasquale Menna greets Councilwoman Linda Schwabenbauer as she joins the event. Like many others at the event, Zipprich praised Mayor's Ball committee co-chairs Barbara Boas and Debbie Marks for putting together the event.



“They’ve worked their fingers to the bone”, Zipprich said. Councilwoman Linda Schwabenbauer praised the panoramic view of the Navesink River visible from the second-floor reception.

“We were just looking out on the river as if we had just seen it for the first time,” she said.

Schwabenbauer said she likes that the borough could come together to support two issues that aren’t politically focused.

“It’s great to see all the past and current mayors, and both parties supporting [these causes],” Schwabenbauer said. “These really are not partisan issues, and it’s great to see that sort of lived out.” Library Director Elizabeth McDermott said the event would benefit the library tremendously. “I know that when the mayor first approached us and said for the first annual ball that the library and the Parker clinic were going to be the recipients, we were incredibly touched and honored and grateful,” McDermott said. “And it’s turned out to be an amazing event.

“We struggled so much this year. [I hope] that maybe as a result of this, some of our plans might come to fruition.” Eugene Cheslock, president of the Parker Family Health Center board, agreed that the ball would greatly support his organization. “We’ve been trying to raise our consciousness level in town for quite a while,” Cheslock said. “We are very quiet at what we do, day in and day out. It’s not glamorous. This kind of event is worth a billion dollars to us.”

During the event’s cocktail hour, attendees munched on pork sliders and lamb chop appetizers while entering their names in silent raffles.

Multiple individuals and organizations were honored at the ball. Red Bank RiverCenter received the Outstanding Community Service Award; the Two River Theater received the Cultural & Arts Award; Gerry Eisner received the Historical Legacy Award; Downtown Investors received the Urban Development Award; and Seals Eastern received the Manufacturing & Technology Award.

As he arrived at the ball sporting a red bowtie, Councilman Michael DuPont basked in the thrill of the event. “I think it’s great — the vibrance, the energy — and you’ve got all of the mayors that are still here,” DuPont said. “It’s bipartisan, so just a lot of good energy, a lot of life — and that’s what it’s about. It’s kind of hip here. It’s kind of the epitome of Red Bank. All of the mayors are here, and they all represent a great history of Red Bank.”

McKenna, as a former mayor, said he was glad to be a part of Red Bank’s lineage.

“I consider myself a very lucky guy who had the opportunity to be the mayor of Red Bank,” McKenna said. “With so many fabulous people tonight that I’ve known for many, many years now — some new, some old — it’s an incredible collection of people. “It’s an extraordinary feeling, and I’m honored to be part of the group. I think this is an event which we should try to repeat.”