

WINE AUCTIONS

Wine Scores Big for Charity in 2014

Revenues at charity wine auctions across the United States continued to grow in 2014. Collectively, the top 10 such events raised \$37,248,815 in live sales, an 8.1 percent increase over the previous year's live-sale total. The take is the largest in history, surpassing the record set in 2007. Growth was across the board; for the first time, each of the 10 top charity auctions recorded more than \$1 million in live sales.

Auction Napa Valley retained its spot at the summit with a growth of \$2.1 million over 2013. The auction has now given more than \$145 million to local charities in its 34-year history. Members of Napa Valley Vintners, a nonprofit trade association, donated and bid on many of the lots at the event. "We can't emphasize enough the importance of vintner support and involvement to the auction's overall success and continued growth over time," said communications director Patsy McGaughey.

For the second year in a row, Auction Napa Valley claimed the highest-earning wine-only lot, and for the second year in a row, Bill Harlan donated it. Selling for \$600,000, the package included debut and large-format bottlings from Harlan's Promontory winery.

The Sonoma Harvest Wine Auction credited the generosity of local vintners for its record success as well. Held at Chateau St. Jean winery, the auction raised \$2.29 million, returning to the top 10 after

an 11-year hiatus from the list. "Our vintners and growers set out to show their support for the children and families of this region," said co-director Maureen Cottingham.

No. 2 earner Naples Winter Wine Festival saw a whopping 53 percent growth over 2013. Co-chair Chuck Hallberg said this was because of the strengthening economy. "When the stock market does well, so does philanthropy. There is no denying that a strong economy helps," he said. Fellow chair Tom Moran also cited the event's growing popularity. "We sold out for the first time since 2008," he said. "Six hundred under the tent, and many of them were new attendees."

Houston is another example of a community that has consistently donated generously through wine. The Champion Wine Auction, held in conjunction with the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo, is remarkable in that all of the auction lots comprise wines that can be purchased at retail in Texas. "You can go to the retailer the next day and purchase an auction bottle for \$500," said Joel Cowley, president of Houston

Livestock Show and Rodeo. "But someone the night before may have spent \$200,000 on it. The wine is a great avenue to interest people, but ultimately they understand our charitable mission."

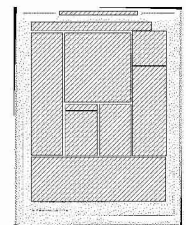
Celebrating its 30th year, Classic Wines Auction of Portland, Ore., returned to the top 10 for the first time in four years. Executive director Heather Martin noted the im-

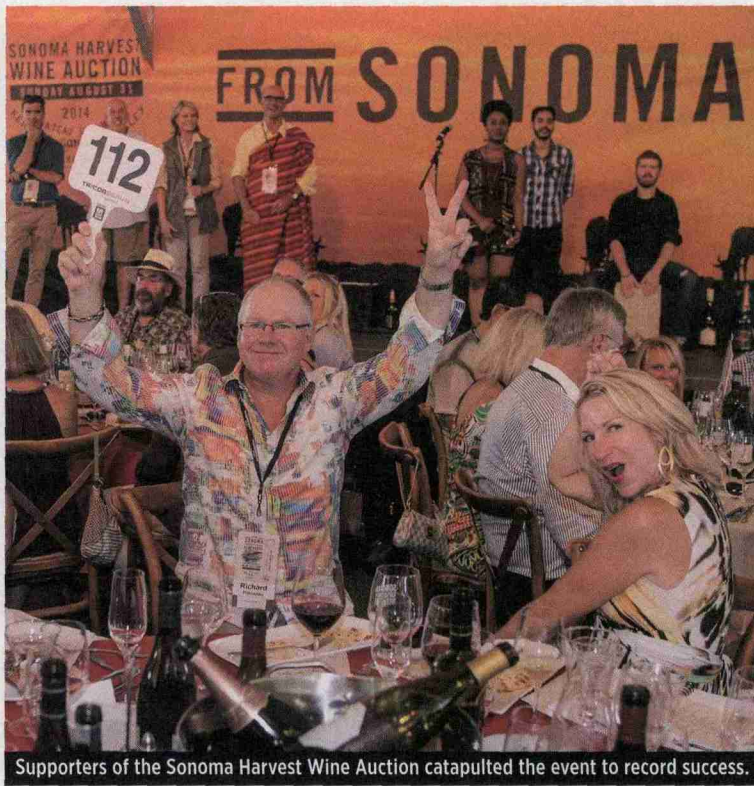
portance of the anniversary but added that the event had also seen "a solid growth pattern since the downturn in the economy."

The St. Helena Hospital Foundation Gala also celebrated a milestone. Now in its 20th year, the auction raised just under \$1 million in live sales for the hospital. The total represented a 19.5 percent increase from 2013, but even so, it was nudged out of the top 10.

A common thread among the auctions is a commitment to children. Six of the top events fund charities aiding children in local communities. Destin Charity Wine Auction, an event that has bounded up the list from a debut at No. 10 in 2012 to No. 4 last year, is one of them. "It is hard to describe the impact \$2 million dollars has on a community this size," said president John Russell. "We need to raise as much money as fast we can and get it to our charities now. A child is only a child for so long; a window closes, and that child might not have gotten the help they needed."

—Neville Galvin





Supporters of the Sonoma Harvest Wine Auction catapulted the event to record success.

TOP 10 U.S. CHARITY WINE AUCTIONS OF 2014

EVENT	BENEFICIARIES	LOCATION	LIVE BIDS*
Auction Napa Valley	Health and children's organizations	St. Helena, Calif.	\$12,750,000
Naples Winter Wine Festival	Naples Children & Education Foundation	Naples, Fla.	\$12,100,000
Sonoma Harvest Wine Auction	Various in Sonoma County	Kenwood, Calif.	\$2,287,500
Destin Charity Wine Auction	Children's charities in northwest Florida	Miramar Beach, Fla.	\$1,720,850
Rodeo Uncorked! Champion Wine Auction & Dinner	Houston educational and agricultural programs	Houston	\$1,700,000
Southwest Food & Wine Festival	Golisano Children's Hospital of Southwest Florida and others	Miromar Lakes, Fla.	\$1,520,000
V Foundation Wine Celebration	V Foundation for Cancer Research	Oakville, Calif.	\$1,428,400
Rusty Staub Foundation 22nd Annual Wine Auction Dinner	Rusty Staub Foundation	New York	\$1,422,445
Classic Wines Auction	Children and family charities	Portland, Ore.	\$1,312,540
High Museum Atlanta Wine Auction	High Museum of Art	Atlanta	\$1,007,080

*Each year, Wine Spectator tracks the results of charity wine auctions in the United States. These auctions have multiple revenue streams, from ticket sales, corporate sponsorships and silent and live auctions. For the purposes of comparison, the auctions are here ranked by their self-reported live auction totals.