

## Urban Community School "Celebrating a Growing Community"

The energy and excitement were evident at Urban Community School's fall benefit, "Celebrating a Growing Community," which was part pep rally/part interactive learning and held at the dazzling new facility. The gymnasium was decorated with huge bouquets of purple, red, green and orange balloons. And guests, about 400 of them, dressed down – in their favorite T-shirts and sneakers.

As guests arrived, they received notes from students that told them which classroom to visit to learn about what the students are studying and what they like best about UCS. Students in Room 250 said they like the additional space the new school offers. And, they are thrilled to have an art room and science lab, which they never had before.

The event, which raised about \$250,000 for a scholarship program for students, diverged from the traditional benefits the school has held. A simple and delicious dinner of fried chicken, Cole slaw and potato salad was served family style at banquet tables in the gym. The room was divided into four teams competing against each other to win one of four raffle items that included a digital camera, gasoline gift card, video iPod and Visa cash cards. Patrons were invited to donate money for a particular need at the school, such as library books, a year's tuition for one student, a field trip to the Museum of Natural History, textbooks, academic competitions and more.

Guests also had the chance to purchase engravable paver bricks they could personalize with their own messages.

The evening was lighthearted, festive and well orchestrated. Instead of a traditional auction of items, UCS came up with a very innovative tool for fund-raising. Hats off to the committee headed by Sue Sherwin.

School Director Sr. Maureen Doyle said that one of the goals this year was to involve the students in a meaningful way. About 60 students and 12 alumni attended the event and shared their insight about UCS. Ten-year-old student Melissa Thomas, who was present three years ago at the groundbreaking and turned the dirt with a shovel, told guests she wanted to be a veterinarian and follow her sister Samantha's example of being an accomplished woman. Samantha went on to get her master's and a great job that takes her all over the country.

The school, which serves 440 students on the Near West Side, is sponsored by the Ursuline Sisters of Cleveland. It offers a Montessori preschool, an award-winning alternatives-to-violence program, individualized instruction and customized learning projects, such as the Graduation Outcomes Project. STORY BY SALLI McSHERRY. PHOTOGRAPHS BY JOHN BASHIAN



Cindy Hicks, Sue Sherwin, Michelle Arquillo and Sheila Berry (*Celebrating a Growing Community*)



Sr. Maureen Doyle and Sandy Stark (*Celebrating a Growing Community*)



Mike Nock and Jan Roller (*Celebrating a Growing Community*)



Mary Green, Mathias Ulach, Joyce Smith and Mary Anne Lucas (*Celebrating a Growing Community*)



Lauren Rich-Fine, Dan Gunther and Fr. Tony Schuerger (*Celebrating a Growing Community*)



Judy and Alan Krulak with Brandy Harris (*Celebrating a Growing Community*)