

CHARITY

# Mardi Gras Gala Funds Crohn's Disease Vaccine

By Maggie Sharpe  
Staff Writer

Three Orinda moms are hosting a festive Mardi Gras Gala on Saturday, Feb. 6, to raise money for a vaccine for Crohn's disease, a chronic inflammatory bowel disorder that affects the entire digestive tract. It commonly starts in young adulthood, though young children can get it too. The moms – Annabelle Hall, Christine Pitt and Dina Fiatarone – all have an adult child with Crohn's.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Christine Pitt (L), Annabelle Hall and Dina Fiatarone, who all have children with Crohn's disease, are hosting a Mardi Gras Gala on Saturday, Feb. 6 at the Lafayette Community Center to raise money for a vaccine currently under development.

Hall said there are two good reasons to enjoy the gala. "The first is to support this amazing and noble cause; the second is that it's going to be a lot of fun!"

The gala will raise money for the MAP vaccine, which is currently under development at Kings College in London.

"We hope that the MAP vaccine will change the landscape for sufferers of this terrible and painful disease," said Hall, whose 23-year-old son Anthony was diagnosed with Crohn's when he was 22. "One hundred percent of the proceeds from the event will go to fund the vaccine and the clinical trials that are set to start in July. The gala organizers are all volunteers, so there is absolutely no overhead." Hall said the vaccine has been successfully tested on cattle and mice. "The research is absolutely compelling," she said.

MAP ("mycobacterium avium subspecies paratuberculosis") is a type of bacteria that Kings College professor John Hermon-Taylor and many other researchers believe to be the cause of Crohn's disease. Unlike ulcerative colitis (UC), which affects only the intestines, Crohn's affects the whole digestive tract, including the mouth.

"A patient's digestive tract from their mouth to the colon can be riddled with painful ulcers. There is also the risk of secondary infection to the skin and eyes," said Hall, adding that MAP can be found throughout the environment, including riv-

[SEE MAP page 14]

# A Gathering of Giving for Children



ALICIA CERVENKA PHOTOGRAPHY

(L-R) Children's Health Guild president April Bowers and Holiday Boutique and Luncheon Co-Chairs Laura Pavlovich and Anne Woolway at their December 11 Ritz Carlton San Francisco event. Proceeds from the event (\$150K) benefit UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital Oakland's Fund-A-Need program which supports their Child Life Services and also respite care at George Mark Children's House.

More than 400 members of the Children's Health Guild (CHG) gathered at the Ritz Carlton in San Francisco on Dec. 11 for the Annual Holiday Shopping Boutique and Luncheon fundraiser. The theme was a "Gathering of Giving." Emcee and TV personality Diane Dwyer introduced two families whose stories illustrate how CHG has helped them.

April Bowers of Orinda, CHG president, worked with event co-chairs Laura Pavlovich and Anne Woolway and many volunteers, to create a diverse program including the raffle of a 4.5 carat aquamarine pendant donated by Morrison's Jewelers of Orinda.

For more information, visit [www.childrenshealthguild.org](http://www.childrenshealthguild.org).

– Elana O'Loskey, Staff Writer



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Laura Abrams

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