



Stunning Romance of the Mission Gala Honors Myron Sukut and Mozelle Sukut, Ph.D. and Features Abi Carter

San Juan Capistrano, Calif. (Sept. 18, 2025) – Historic Mission San Juan Capistrano was the site of the coveted Romance of the Mission gala held on September 12. This year’s beautiful event with the theme Love Blooms Here honored Myron Sukut and Mozelle Sukut Ph.D. for their many contributions to Mission San Juan Capistrano and featured a spectacular concert by artist Abi Carter in the Ruins of the Great Stone Church. Net proceeds of over \$300K will support the Mission’s continued preservation and stewardship.

San Juan Capistrano residents Myron Sukut and Mozelle Sukut, PhD. have long supported Mission San Juan and numerous local causes. Mozelle Sukut helped create the Mission’s Artifacts Council and Gardening Angels and is currently on the city’s 250th Anniversary Celebration committee. Founder of Santa Ana-based Sukut Construction, Myron Sukut previously served on the Mission Preservation Foundation Board and his company is instrumental in many local building projects.

“These special friends have done so much to make a difference and while we know they typically don’t like publicity, it was our honor and duty to recognize their many contributions at this year’s gala,” said Mission Preservation Board Chair George O’Connell.

Mission San Juan Capistrano’s Executive Director Mechelle Lawrence Adams led the evening program followed by a magnificent live concert in the 19th century Ruins of the Great Stone Church featuring singer-songwriter Abi Carter. The Coachella Valley native and season 22 winner of American Idol performed moving renditions of *Goodbye Yellow Brick Road*, the gala tradition *When the Swallows Come Back to Capistrano* and ended

the set with *Hallelujah* while a backdrop of an incredible digital mapping projection was displayed on the walls of the Ruins.

The famous Mission bells were rung by Mission bell ringer Michael Gastelum as guests made their way to the Central Courtyard for dinner coordinated by Inn at the Mission San Juan Capistrano Executive Chef Adrián Hernandez.

Reverend Monsignor J. Michael McKiernan offered the dinner blessing followed by a deliciously curated four-course, plated dinner served by the Inn at the Mission San Juan Capistrano team led by General Manager Matt Harrison. Wine pairings were provided by Kyle and Sylvia Franson of Rancho Capistrano Winery and Chris Lobo of Native Hands Winery while beer service was donated by Matt Ewing of Mission Brewery.

Among the major gala supporters were Eden and George O'Connell/O'Connell Family Foundation, The Moiso Family, EJ and Michael Farrell, Dame Connie and Dr. Peter Spenuzza/Spenuzza Velastegui Family Foundation, Bette and Wylie A. Aitken, Laurie and Darren O. Aitken, Kerry and Gavin S. Herbert Jr./Roger's Gardens, Chris and Bill Griffith, Inn at the Mission San Juan Capistrano, Deanna and Robert Saint-Aubin, Lugano, Waldorf Astoria Monarch Beach Resort & Club.

Other major contributors to the incredible evening were Brite Ideas and D Lighting for their stellar production and lighting program, BBJ La Tavola Specialty Linen, Signature Elevated Rentals and Brand Enhance Parking & Hospitality. Support from the Stirrat and Roth families provided underwriting for the gala's incredible invitation and Resurgam décor tied to the event theme, Love Blooms Here. A commemorative book donated by James Irvine Swinden and The Irvine Museum *Franz A. Bishcoff, the Life & Art of an American Master* was gifted to each guest.

The Gala's 2025 opportunity drawing included packages from Inn at the Mission San Juan Capistrano, Waldorf Astoria Monarch Beach Resort & Club, Hyatt Regency San Francisco, Four Seasons Napa Valley, Hilton Hotel Palm Springs/Kaiser Grill, radiant cut diamond earrings by Lugano, a Discovery Cube experience, an electric folding bike from Jim Curwood of Buy My Bikes and an original painting *Morning Light at the Mission* by David Imlay.

For a complete listing of gala supporters or for more information about Mission San Juan Capistrano, visit www.missionsjc.com. To learn about how to pledge for next year's 250th anniversary gala on September 18, 2026, contact Mechelle Lawrence Adams at 949.234.1311.

About Mission San Juan Capistrano

Known as the "Jewel of the Missions," Mission San Juan Capistrano is a historic landmark and museum that features exhibits, five-language audio tour, festivals and public programming. As Orange County's only mission, the site is home to Serra Chapel, the Ruins of The Great Stone Church (circa 1796) and original padres' quarters.

Founded on November 1, 1776, by Saint Junipero Serra as the seventh of 21 California missions established by Spain, Mission San Juan Capistrano is owned by the Diocese of Orange and receives no church or state funding. The Mission Preservation Foundation, comprised of business and community leaders, is its fundraising entity committed to ensuring education, preservation and its long-term historic and religious significance.

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