



Photo by Liz Mackinnon

G.I.M.S. founder Taly Haffar and Erin Hendricks keep the scholarship running and Gustavo Ipiña's legacy alive.

Woodrow Scholarship Survives 'Grinchy' Economy

Posted December 15, 2008, 3:00 a.m. by Liz Mackinnon

Despite a "Grinch-like" economy this holiday season, organizers of the fourth annual Winter Celebration benefiting the Gustavo Ipiña Memorial Scholarship fund at Woodrow Wilson High School are calling the event a huge success.

About 130 people filled the softly lit room of the Bodega Bar at the Chateau Wine Market on Dec. 6, for an opportunity to mix and mingle with friends over drinks and hors d'oeuvres.

Donations at the door and proceeds from the evening's silent auction totaled just more than \$9,000, according to Assistant U.S. Attorney and G.I.M.S. founder Taly Haffar.

The crowd was an eclectic mix of members of the Dallas legal community, and friends, teachers, and alumni from Woodrow who came out to show their support for a cause that is gaining notoriety despite a slump in the economy, according to Haffar.

"Last year's event raised more money and the attendance was higher," he said. However, "times are tough for people right now, so for them to reach down and give to charity is very good. I would definitely declare the night a success."

Since the first fundraiser in 2005, a small wine tasting at the same location, the scholarship has made the dream of college a reality for four Woodrow students. Supporters of the G.I.M.S. attribute its success to the team that maintains the fund with a level of dedication that might best be described as loving diligence.

Taly Haffar, the prosecutor who sent Ipiña's killer to prison, and prosecutor Erin Hendricks devote all but one to two months a year to mentoring scholarship recipients, securing donations, organizing benefits, and spreading the word about the G.I.M.S.

After hearing Ipiña's story for the first time that night, Andre Kwon, a recent law school graduate, was reminded of his senior year in New Jersey when a close friend died on the day of their high school graduation.

"The circumstances were different, but I can empathize with the friends from high school who miss him," Kwon said.

Haffar had told Kwon about the Woodrow student with the bright future and a passion for living who was killed in a road-rage incident just one week before his senior year.

"After meeting Taly and hearing Gustavo's story, I was really saddened by the senseless death," Kwon said. "Just learning about Gustavo a little bit, I was really impressed by his character, his dreams, goals, his aspirations, and his dedication to his family."

Other friends in the legal community wonder how Haffar and Hendricks maintain their focus on the scholarship in light of their demanding careers.

"Really the bottom line is we are both very passionate people, we are both driven to make it succeed." Haffar said.

He also thanks friends and the community for their help and dedication to keeping Ipiña's legacy alive. ■

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For more information about Gustavo Ipiña, and how to donate to the scholarship visit the scholarship [Web site](#).

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