

# Daily Pilot



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## The Crowd: Soka University draws hundreds to Peace Gala



Dita Shemke, Danny Habuki and Joan May help to create the 2016 Soka University Peace Gala. (Courtesy of Robert Rooks)

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NOVEMBER 10, 2016, 4:21 PM

**T**he O.C. is home to a very special university. Ranked among the top tier of liberal arts institutions of higher learning in the U.S., Soka University of America stands above the fray because it is founded upon Buddhist principles of "peace, human rights and the sanctity of life." On Oct. 8, Soka held its 12th annual Peace Gala at its Aliso Viejo campus, attracting some 500 guests and raising more than \$900,000 for student scholarships.

The gala was co-chaired by **Joan May** and **Dita Shemke**, who have been serving Soka for 10 years to produce the scholarship fundraising event. A wide cross-section of O.C. business, social and cultural support came together to ensure its financial success. Sponsors included **Minora and Kinuko Kogure**, **Steven and Kumiko MacDonald**, **Jim and Sheila Peterson**, **Steve Chi Kong Lee**, and **Judy Chao Di Chow** and **Luis and Linda Nieves**.

Also front and center for Soka were **Allan and Mary Lou Beck, Matilda Buck, Elisabeth Carter, Teiko Cooper, Joe and Junko Perez, Chris Chen, Richard and Misty Fisher, and George and Kazue Elliot.**



Jose Feliciano entertained the Soka gathering. (Courtesy of Robert Rooks)

An evening of dining and dancing was emceed by **Madison Ray**, with auction duties in the hands of **Dawn Marie Kotonis**. The guest artist of the night was international recording artist **Jose Feliciano**, who created an uplifting and inspirational performance that was a classy conclusion to an exceptional evening in South County.

Soka University's student body consists of 60% American and 40% international students. Qualified students enrolled coming from households with annual incomes under \$60,000 receive free tuition.