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## American Celebration 2008 Nets \$2.1 Million for Scholarships

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**ORANGE, Calif., Nov. 3, 2008** – Chapman University’s 27th Annual American Celebration gala, held on Saturday, Nov. 1, raised more than \$2.1 million for the student scholarship fund. The spectacular student-performed stage show and black-tie dinner gala, one of Orange County’s signature social events, drew more than 750 attendees, who arrived to an outdoor champagne reception on Chapman’s new Fahmy Attallah Piazza and then stepped inside historic Memorial Hall to be dazzled by an hour-long Broadway style revue by the students of Chapman’s College of Performing Arts.

The theme for this year’s show, under the artistic direction of Dale Merrill, associate dean of the College of Performing Arts, was “The Movies That Made Us Sing and Dance.” The talented student performers, in colorful costumes, brought to life scenes and songs from such silver-screen classics as *Singin’ in the Rain*, *Top Hat* and *The Band Wagon*. The excellent accompanying orchestra was conducted by Dr. William Hall, dean of the College of Performing Arts, celebrating his 46th year as a Chapman faculty member.

In a special appearance, acclaimed Orange County-based dance troupe Backhausdance, whose members are all Chapman alumni, performed a new version of the “dream ballet” from *An American in Paris*. The piece was choreographed by the group’s artistic director and current Chapman dance faculty member, Jennifer Backhaus, who received Chapman’s Alumni Achievement in the Arts Award at this year’s American Celebration.

Broadway legend Tommy Tune, winner of nine Tony Awards and countless other honors, added yet another award to his collection when he received Chapman’s Lifetime Achievement in the Arts Award during the show. Tune won his first Tony as Best Featured Actor in a Musical in Michael Bennett’s *Seesaw* (1974) and has since gone on to win for Best Choreography (*Best Little Whorehouse in Texas*, *A Day in Hollywood/A Night in the Ukraine*, *Grand Hotel*, *My One and Only*, *Will Rogers Follies*), Best Actor in a Musical (*My One and Only*) and Best Director (*Nine*, *Grand Hotel*). He charmed the Memorial Hall crowd by singing Gershwin’s “S’Wonderful” in thanks for his award, then launching into a soft-shoe/tap routine.

Then Tune and Chapman President Jim Doti (who earlier had performed with the students in “Singin’ in the Rain” and pulled off quite an accomplished ballroom dance routine with surprise partner Julia Argyros) compared heights (Tune is 6-foot 6 ½ inches; Doti is...not), with Doti climbing atop a step-stool to partner with Tune for the hand-clapping routine from *Will Rogers*

*Follies.*

Chapman trustee Jim Mazzo and his wife Kelly, who chaired last year's American Celebration, were honored as Chapman's Corporate Citizens of the Year. This year's American Celebration was co-chaired by Marta and Raj Bhathal and Marybelle and S. Paul Musco.

The show's finale, "That's Entertainment," sent the guests singing out of Memorial Hall and into the festival tent, where they enjoyed a sumptuous dinner that featured poached lobster salad with caviar vinaigrette, roasted halibut with black olive sauce, and a duo of chocolate mousse and banana crème brûlée. The tent interior sparkled with black-and-white décor that recalled Hollywood nightclubs of the late '40s and early '50s, complete with glittering crystal bead-fall chandeliers, graceful white phalaenopsis orchids, crystal cubes packed with white roses, and white fur trim on the beaded white table linens.

American Celebration has netted more than \$15 million for Chapman University scholarships over the 27 years of its existence. Nearly 80 percent of the students at the private university receive some form of scholarship or financial assistance, and proceeds from American Celebration account for 15 percent of all scholarship funds.