

OPINION

The Crowd: Country artist Steven Cade livens up SPIN's Denim and Diamonds gala



SPIN family mom Gaby Harris and her daughters stand to the left of Kellee and Steven Cade during the recent Denim and Diamonds fundraiser. (Ann Chatillon)

By **B.W. Cook**

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“Ya’ll come!” And they did. Some 200 benefactors of Costa Mesa based [Serving People in Need \(SPIN\)](#) converged at dusk on a recent Friday night turning over their

“horsepower” to livery attendants stationed in front of Strawberry Farms’ Big Red Barn in Irvine.

The evening billed as Denim and Diamonds was a boot stompin’ success for the local agency, which places homeless and near homeless Orange County families with children in permanent housing. For nearly 40 years, this small, local nonprofit founded by the late Sam Boyce has transformed thousands of lives in Orange County. **The Boyce family** attended the 2024 Western gala fundraiser feted with a major ovation from the crowd.



Attending the SPIN gala were Lorie and Jim Buchanan and Laura and Hal Reisiger. (Ann Chatillon)

The gala was chaired by the dedicated **MaryLou Shattuck**, a longtime board member of SPIN. She was joined by her supportive volunteer committee including fellow board

members **Katie Domagala** and **Mike Gilmore**, with **Shelly Vercruse** and **Chef Jamie Gwen**. In addition to placing families in housing, SPIN assists clients with employment counseling, medical and dental services, childcare, education, transportation assistance and much more. The average annual success rate with clients placed in permanent housing exceeds 92%.



Attending the gala were Monica Saint, Maureen Flanagan (SPIN board member), Carol Richmond and Laura Ruiz. (Ann Chatillon)

This season SPIN has been led by a new executive director, **David Wetzel**, a former executive in the fast-food industry who chose to dedicate his next stage of work life to saving others in need, and giving back to the community. Wetzel witnessed years of people struggling on the streets where his restaurants operated. He joined **Ladeshia Goubert**, SPIN manager of donors and volunteer services working closely with Shattuck and committee to ensure the major success in the barn.

An enthusiastic crowd came to celebrate. Cocktails and hors d'oeuvres were served al fresco beside the Red Barn facing the Strawberry Farms Golf Course as the sun set behind hills. The sound of crickets punctuated lively conversation and cowboy guitar players picking at the strings. During the reception the crowd, including **John and Lynn Osth, David and Emily Plourde, John and Kathleen Falcetti**, and SPIN board members all enjoyed a special converted trailer turned into a traveling beer bar. Greeting longtime friends, the crowd perused the silent auction filled with travel, dining, fashion, spirits, jewelry and more.





Chairman of the Serving People in Need board and presenting sponsor of the evening Curtis Scheetz. (Ann Chatillon)

The presenting sponsor for SPIN was its board chairman **Curtis Scheetz** with his wife, **Jill**, and their company Total Environmental Management (TEM). A generous “match” from **the Scheetz family** compelled the crowd to give with considerable pride. **Curtis Scheetz** joined fellow donors including **Craig and Katie Domagala** of Air Treatment Corp., **Laura and Hal Reisiger**, **Lorie and Jim Buchanan**, **John and Carolyn Couts** and **Wayne and Dianne Blackburn**. Also supporting the cause were **Dick and Kim Crawford**, **the Frome Family Foundation**, Our Lady Queen of Angels Catholic Church, **Lynn Freer** and Mothers Market.

With the opening of the barn doors the crowd flowed in for dinner and the special evening program. Wetzel, Shattuck and committee planned the fundraiser around a most unique performer lending the theme of the night. Grammy-nominated country music composer and singer **Steven Cade** arrived from Nashville with **his wife Kellee**, **son Levi** and daughter **Eliana**, fronting the SPIN performance. In addition to his music, Cade is known for his philanthropy, invested in a program he calls “[Giving Guitars](#).”

Traveling the nation and beyond, Cade donates a guitar to a deserving youth in a gesture of delivering inspiration, high hopes and perhaps even opening a musical door to a young person living in difficult situations. With such purpose, and plenty of emotion, Cade presented two guitars to a pair of sisters that are part of a SPIN family in Orange County. The applause was deafening. In turn, SPIN presented Cade with its Jean Wegener Humanitarian Award for 2024.

With that, the tone was set for the incomparable emcee of the night, TV’s **Chef Jamie Gwen**, to work her special talent. Gwen’s genuine and heartfelt outreach for SPIN ultimately raised the significant funds for 2025 programs all due in great part because of the “match” provided by the Scheetzes.



Emcee Chef Jamie Gwen, left, and event donors and producers Wayne and MaryLou Shattuck at the Serving People in Need Country Western gala. (Ann Chatillon)

Strawberry Farms created and served a wonderful dinner in the barn filled with blue and white gingham clothed tables festooned with huge yellow sunflower center piece displays. The butter cake and See's chocolate candies for dessert took the night over the top!

Steven Cade performed his solo act for the audience followed by joining his band inviting the crowd to line dance. By the end of the evening, more than \$350,000 had been raised.



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