



~ Parties with a Purpose ~

The Spirit of Giving in San Antonio is all that it's "Cracked" up to be... and more

The crack of the cascarone, the gurgle of a poured bottle of wine, the pop of flavor in one, perfect morsel.

Fiesta San Antonio is a taste sensation.

It's also a money-maker.

According to the Fiesta San Antonio Commission, our city's 11-day celebration of heritage, history and culture translates into a \$284 million boost to the bottom line. That money that is then poured back into our community through the nonprofit organizations who come together to make dozens of Fiesta events come to life thanks to the businesses that support those organizations and their missions all year long. And don't forget the exposure San Antonio enjoys, as it shows off its unique flair and flavor to the rest of the country in a positive, impactful way.

Fiesta San Antonio started as a small commemoration of the Battle of the Alamo and the Battle of San Jacinto, so it's fitting that so many of its signature events have grown from small, grassroots celebrations into major activities that combine nonprofit organizations and business leaders.

A Taste of the Northside is a perfect example.

[A Taste of the Northside \(TONS\)](#) started out in 2000 as a small fundraising project for [Brighton Center](#) called "The Queen of the Vine," conceived by a family-owned wine shop on the city's far northside, and executed by volunteers, board members and staff members of Brighton. "That first year, we had about 150 people attend, and we made about \$3,500," Kim Jefferies, Executive Director of Brighton Center remembers. "I handled all the logistics, marketing, ticketing and acknowledgement and the board and the owners of Wines, Etc. secured the donated wine and food."

Immediately, it was clear the northside of San Antonio, which was exploding in growth, was the perfect location in which to widen the sphere of Fiesta's reach, out of the downtown area, and into the suburbs. A Taste of the Northside was born, with The Queen of the Vine presiding over the event. "In 2002, when we received our Fiesta designation, we jumped from about 450 people to 1,200 that year and have been growing ever since." In fact, A Taste of the Northside has evolved into one of Fiesta's signature events. The event is so popular, many refer to it as the northside's [Night in Old San Antonio](#), a long-standing Fiesta tradition, that celebrates the city's rich history as a mission village, while raising money for the [San Antonio Conservation Society](#). "In 2010 we had 5,200 people and raised over \$350,000," Kim said.

That money is vital to Brighton Center's growing mission to provide education and developmental services to children with disabilities or delays, and continually support their families as Brighton educates the community. Jefferies says the center needs approximately \$1,000,000 each year to keep up with its growth and maintain its programs. The community's support through A Taste of the Northside and other programs throughout the year go a long way toward making that possible.

This year's event, held at The Club at Sonterra, continued on its upward trajectory, with more than 50 restaurants serving up bite-sized tastes – 75,000 tidbits in all! As a major Fiesta San Antonio event, it is a major undertaking for Brighton Center. "We have a fundraising Committee of about 15 staff, community members and board members, and an event planning company that works on the event," Kim said. Although figures for the 2011 event are unavailable at this time, there was plenty of optimism in the days leading up to the celebration. *(For an in-depth look at how A Taste of the Northside has managed its explosive growth, click [here](#).)*

TONS couldn't grow and thrive without support from the business community, specifically [The Lynd Company](#), which is now the presenting sponsor for Taste of the Northside. "They [The Lynd Family] are generous businessmen who have a heart for kids with disabilities," says Kim. "What began as an event partnership has grown into a collaborative effort to ensure that Brighton Center has the tools and resources it needs to continue to operate."

"It was ingrained in me by my father and family to be a good steward in the community, and to help and contribute when and where we can," said Mike Lynd, Vice President of Investments and Managing Director of Lynd Residential Properties. Lynd first learned about Brighton Center about ten years ago through a college friend's wife, Shannon Beckel. "Immediately, it struck a chord," said Lynd. "We didn't see a high level of support for organizations such as Brighton, and we saw it as an opportunity to make an impact, make our dollars have a big impact, and help families and kids on a large scale."

Mike and The Lynd Company helped with one "Queen of the Vine" fundraiser, and their involvement in Brighton Center and A Taste of the Northside grew from there. Lynd was instrumental in helping to grow A Taste of the Northside, and was in support of Kim and her staff's decision to bring professional event planning expertise to the table. "You always have to grow, improve and enhance the experience," Mike explained. "They work hard to ensure that

we continue to grow the event to raise more funds,” Jefferies said. “They are actively involved in bringing their business to the event as sponsors.”

Lynd credits Beckel with helping to widen Brighton’s circle of support. “Shannon’s network is immense. Many of the Queens of the Vine have come from her network,” said Lynd. [The Queen of the Vine](#) raises money throughout the year for Brighton Center, and reigns over A Taste of the Northside. “They are tireless fundraisers,” explained Mike. “They raise a significant amount of money before A Taste of the Northside even happens.” [Amy Jackson](#), who is the Queen of the Vine for 2011, raised nearly \$60,000 this year for Brighton, not to mention raising community awareness about the center’s missions and programs.

Soon, others within The Lynd Company were introduced to the Brighton community through volunteer work, business and strategic planning, and board membership. Sean Kiehne, who is The Lynd Company’s CFO, serves as Brighton Center’s Board Chairman; Jason Espejo, Executive Vice President for The Lynd Company, also is a member of Brighton’s board. The relationship has flourished to the point that The Lynd Company now provides some low-income families in the Brighton community with rental assistance through its [Fundamental Foundations](#) program. “Without a stable place to live, a child and especially a child with a disability will not have the nurturing and stable home environment to ensure that they can reach their potential,” explains Jefferies. “By providing the housing, they are giving these children and their families the BEST chance at improving their development and transitioning successfully into and out of school.”

While The Lynd Company is a fervent supporter of Brighton Center, there are many others in the community whose partnerships are vital to the success of Taste of the Northside and Brighton Center. “HEB has been a BIG supporter of the event and Brighton over the past few years, as well as Valero Energy Corporation,” Kim said. HEB’s support for TONS has grown in the past four years. Jefferies says in addition to more than \$20,000 in sponsorship for Taste of the Northside, the grocery giant has expanded its circle of support. “Last year they chose Brighton Center as the beneficiary of a new \$75,000 playground through the Tournament of Champions.” Another superstar partner: Foresters. “Foresters started by purchasing tickets to the event for their members, and have purchased 100 tickets for the past three years,” Kim explains. “This past year they gave an additional \$10,000 to our child care center to do room makeovers in our classrooms, and are sponsoring another event in May.”

That partner support doesn’t end when the tents are packed up for A Taste of the Northside. And Brighton doesn’t let the community forget it’s here, and its mission is to help children. That’s why they work throughout the year to keep those relationships thriving. “Brighton cannot exist without community support, so our partners, Queen of the Vine and board members are essential in keeping Brighton in the public’s mind throughout the year,” Kim said. “We do two other events to keep the community involved... that allows partners to see the children that they have helped. We also use social networking and specifically [Facebook](#) to keep people engaged in what’s happening” Kim explained.

“It’s more rewarding to be able to put your resources to work for an organization that touches so many lives,” Lynd says. “I love hearing from families who’ve been part of the Brighton experience.”