



Luminaries 'Go Deep' For The Ocean And Raise Over \$800,000 At The Second Annual Ocean Gala

"Screw it! Lets save the ocean!" -- Sir RICHARD BRANSON

The Ocean Gala Committee and Sir Richard Branson. From left to right: Gigi Brisson, John Dill, Susi Mai, Bill Tai, Colette K Young, Sir Richard Branson, Daniela Colton and Maria Serafica-Stermer.



SAN FRANCISCO, Dec. 7, 2016 -- The Second Annual Ocean Gala presented by MaiTai Global and OceanElders raised over \$800,000 for ocean conservation efforts with special guests: Sir Richard Branson, Jackson Browne, Dr. Sylvia Earle, Bertrand Piccard, Bob Weir, Sean Stone, Jessica Stam, Rob Stewart, Gerry Lopez, Captain Don Walsh and Wade Davis.

Sir Richard Branson, who served as the keynote speaker, touched on environmental causes and the new President-elect Donald Trump saying, "We have a president in America now who doesn't believe in climate change and it just means that every single business person, entrepreneur, and social worker has to work that much harder to redress the balance." He proclaimed, "Screw it! Let's save the ocean!" and went on to win a bid on a ten-foot 600 pound stunning shark sculpture by artist Clay Simpson for \$27,000.

Proceeds from the gala support nonprofits aimed at building awareness around ocean conservation, including OceanElders, MaiTai Global and Mission Blue, the recipient of a \$100,000 grant awarded this year by MaiTai Global. Highlights of the auction, organized by Director of Silent and Live Auctions, Colette Young, were a one-on-one with Richard Branson, and a dive with living legend National Geographic's Dr. Sylvia Earle that fetched a whopping \$40,000. Dr. Earle, gushed, "What a night -- a veritable tsunami of passion and support for ocean conservation was on display at the Ocean Gala in San Francisco! Along with the entire Mission Blue team, I would like to say thank you again to MaiTai Global for their generous support of the Mission Blue expeditions program. Here's to working more closely together in 2017, to explore the ocean and continue to inspire the world to care for its protection. Onward and downward!"

MaiTai global also featured The Extreme Virtual Reality Challenge, hosted by VR Fest, and showcased a VR Lounge interactive exhibit at this years gala. The first place winner Danny Copeland was awarded \$10,000 for his project "The Mini Mantas of Maria". Extreme Tech Challenge, another sub-event of MaiTai Global, announced the top ten semi-finalist in the XTC completion at the end of the night: Audicus, Canaria, Cloudwear, Cresilon, Emerge, Intezer Labs, MobileODT, ReDeTec, SWFL Filament and Vantage Robotics.



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Maria Stermer, The Ocean Gala Chair, proudly stated, "This was a phenomenal gala. I'm thrilled that everyone had a fantastic time; it's a rare opportunity to see four world-class speakers for the ocean the same evening – Sir Richard Branson, Dr. Sylvia Earle, Bertrand Piccard and Rob Stewart. Standout items from the auctions included: a Piaget watch, a one-on-one with Oliver Stone, and a week on Sir Richard Branson's private boat Necker Belle – sold to two lucky bidders for \$50,000 each, the highest winning bids of the night. The lovely performance by Yuan Yuan Tan and Tiit Helimets of the San Francisco Ballet, was symbolic of the first class setting that crystallized at the Palace Hotel Grand Ballroom. Our community was incredibly generous and showed that we can make a difference when we're brought together for a common cause we're all passionate about. The sold-out event with over four-hundred attendees from over ten countries was hosted by: Susi Mai and Bill Tai, co-founders of MaiTai Global, and Gigi Brisson, founder and CEO of OceanElders, who also drove the message of how important it is to act now to save our oceans."

The Ocean Gala sponsors include: Virgin Unite, Other World Computing, Piaget, Bitfury, Fairwarning, Setili & Associates, Events.com, Nowboat, Breathometer, Ultra Capital and Tutor Group. www.theoceangala.com #TheOceanGala

MaiTai Global, founded by Susi Mai and Bill Tai, is a group of extraordinary entrepreneurs, innovators and athletes whose collective passion of kiteboarding brings them together. www.maitaiglobal.com #MaiTaiGlobal

OceanElders, founded by Gigi Brisson, is an independent group of global leaders who have joined together to serve as a catalyst in the conservation and protection of the ocean. Notable members include Dr. Sylvia Earle, Sir Richard Branson, Captain Don Walsh, Jean-Michel Cousteau, Jim Cameron, Ted Turner, Jackson Browne, Dr. Bertrand Piccard, E.O. Wilson, Wade Davis, and Gerry Lopez. www.oceanelders.org #OceanElders

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#MaiTaiGlobal #OceanElders #TheOceanGala

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