There is no way to sugarcoat the difficult work of helping others cope with the loss of a loved one. Yet the tempo for griefHaven’s dinner gala and primary fundraiser, held every other year at Marina del Rey Marriott, remained unflagging and upbeat as entertainers Tyce Blau, Emma Hunton, Traci Thoms and Briana Cosco belted out the songs to the Friends of griefHaven Heart-to-Heart Gala, where Palisadian-Post columnist Gail Schenbaum and Pam Solomon were honored for their contributions to the nonprofit.

Founded in 2003 by Susan Whitmore as a personal enterprise and since expanded to a thriving 501(c)(3) with eight grief groups throughout West Los Angeles, griefHaven was born in Pacific Palisades—more specifically out of Kehillat Israel synagogue—after Rabbi Eric Lawton, with whom she has two daughters, said that he is very proud of his wife, Patty. “It’s a wonderful cause,” Lawton said, adding that she lent auction, said that Schenbaum was a TV producer running three shows when he first met her. Schenbaum is busier today, Lawton observed, than during her showbiz days.

“It’s hard to take advice from someone who has not walked in your shoes,” Abrams said, regarding the empathetic work Whitmore is achieving. She added that Whitmore is looking to partner with UCLA to form a grief camp. Whitmore could not have done this without colleagues from her community such as Abrams, Solomon and Schenbaum.

“This is a huge demand [for] griefHaven [which] has created something where people can support each other,” Solomon said.

“It’s hard to take advice from someone who has not walked in your shoes,” Abrams said, regarding the empathetic work Whitmore is achieving. She added that Whitmore is looking to partner with UCLA to form a grief camp. Whitmore could not have done this without colleagues from her community such as Abrams, Solomon and Schenbaum.

As part of griefHaven, Whitmore turned to science to back the notion that survivors of a child death do not die of severe post-traumatic stress disorder. Many firefighters, she learned, deal with a version of PTSD, so she turned to Captain Robert Bates at Los Angeles Fire Department Station 69, who not only suffered mild emotional loss, “I knew on a cellular level that this work was right for me,” she said, in attendance with wife Patty. “It’s a wonderfull cause,”

Pacific Palisades Brook Daugherty, who founded Young Angels of America, an educational organization teaching entrepreneurship and philanthropy, said, “It’s really courageous to take on the needs of people experiencing profound grief. There’s so much opportunity for self-harm so for this organization to reach out and offer a rope, it’s a lifetime.”

Throughout the evening, the songs kept coming, as Cosco seemingly lived up to the title of “Defying Gravity,” a selection from the 1998 Broadway musical Wicked she sang to uproarious applause.

GriefHaven paid tribute to Solomon and Schenbaum for their contributions to the cause. Solomon receiving her Heart-to-Heart Award, and Schenbaum, the woman behind the emergency contact app Emergency and “In One Instant” by-teens, for their film program to help combat distracted driving, accepting the Peace of Heart Award.

Schenbaum’s husband of 29 years, Pacific Palisades-based photographer Eric Lawton, with whom she has two daughters, said that he is very proud of his wife.

Lawton, who contributed the image “Event Horizon #1” to the function’s silent auction, said that Schenbaum was a TV producer running three shows when he first met her. Schenbaum is busier today, Lawton observed, than during her showbiz days.

“She is completely devoted to these projects,” Lawton said, adding that she is creating light in the face of darkness and “using it to help others. She works tirelessly for this. I’m very proud of her.”

Accepting her award, Solomon, who at KI had launched the Tzedakah Teens giving program and, following Rabbi Robert Rieber’s urging, went on to help form Friends of griefHaven in 2012, said that seeing videos of couples “sharing their heart-breaking stories of loss” and how griefHaven had helped ease their emotional pain, “I know on a cellular level that I needed to get involved.”

Schenbaum echoed such sentiments, emphasizing the important work griefHaven does.

“A successful life is not avoiding grief; it’s learning to live with loss in a meaningful way,” Rieber told in a moving video edited together by Columbia College Hollywood student As-tid Cedeno.

A silent auction and a raffle helped bring in much-needed funding to maintain and expand griefHaven’s programming. On the spot, the latter live auction, within 10 minutes, raised about $60,000 in donation commitments inside the banquet room.

With the collective singers delivering their rendition of the uplifting “Seasons of Love” from Rent twice before the night’s end, it appeared to be the right note to end the evening on: one bursting with optimism, hope, rebirth, and the feeling that life, in all of its complexities, continues to reward moving forward.

“We don’t get over losing someone we love, do we?” Whitmore asked rhetorically from the stage. “But we do go on.”