Community giving inspires all

As it is every year, the sold-out Orange County Community Foundation’s annual meeting at Hotel Irvine (this year on Nov. 14) was a veritable who’s who of local philanthropists, business and community leaders who gathered to celebrate the accomplishments made through OCCF.

More than 600 attendees created thunderous applause as OCCF President Shelley Hoss announced that foundation assets grew to $378 million during the fiscal year ending June 30. That means granting more than $300 million to philanthropic causes “in Orange County, across the nation and around the world in the last five years,” Hoss said.

For the fourth consecutive year, OCCF reports showed grants and scholarships reached nearly $79 million, placing OCCF in the top 5 percent in grantmaking among nearly 800 U.S. community foundations.

The event kicked off with a special performance by Orange County’s Voices of Hope Children’s Choir, from Season 13 of “America’s Got Talent.” The youths’ talent inspired a couple standing ovations.

The keynote speaker was Laguna Beach resident Mike Mussallem, chairman and CEO of Edwards Lifesciences. In a powerful, personal address, Mussallem revealed how his and his wife Linda’s experience of having siblings with intellectual disabilities shaped their philanthropy.

“It’s important to look for opportunities to bring strategy and focus to support causes that are close to your heart,” Mussallem told a rapt audience. -COAST STAFF