

Meet The Grizzlies

by Jim Buckley

The Grizzlies Are All Teddy Bears

There's a new wall hanging just in front of **Larry Crandell's** traditional table at **Al Steinman's** Moby Dick on the Santa Barbara wharf. You may have noticed it if you've been invited to sit with Mr. Crandell anytime over the past couple of weeks, but if you haven't, here's what those mug shots represent: each face you see displayed has committed at least \$500 to **Nikki Simon's** Teddy Bear Cancer Foundation. Donors have been nicknamed "Grizzlies."

Nikki Simon, who has lived in downtown Santa Barbara for the past thirteen years, was born and raised in Woodland Hills and moved here to attend SBCC. After a sojourn to Europe (Greece and Switzerland), she returned to Santa Barbara. Her life's work, she has discovered, is to work with and among children with terminal illnesses, something her mother, Sheryl, has been doing at UCLA's Children's Hospital for the past twenty years. Nikki had been volunteering in group homes for wayward kids and gang members, but when her best friend's husband's godson was diagnosed with cancer, she re-discovered her vocation, and created the Teddy Bear Cancer Foundation, whose mission is to help, usually financially with life's daily responsibilities. A Teddy Bear might buy a month's worth of prescription drugs, or pay the rent, or a doctor's bill: anything to help a family and patient get through another month.

One of the things Teddy Bear has done that Nikki is most proud of is to have helped a teenager she calls **Becca** (on the front cover of the Teddy Bear Cancer Foundation brochure) record a CD. Nikki met Becca at the hospital and discovered she had a dream of becoming a singer (she'd sung in a choir). Nikki knew someone in the recording industry, **Sam Frankil**, who arranged for Becca to have a CD made with a producer, **Damian**, who also happened to be producer for **Mariah Carey**. Ms Carey heard the CD and invited Becca to open for her at the Arlington when she played here in December 2003. Becca has become a full-fledged performing singer, thanks to the Teddy Bear Cancer Foundation.

If you're interested in joining what is a virtual "Who's Who" of Santa Barbara business, and wish to become a "Grizzly" (or Papa Bear, Paddington Bear, Roosevelt Bear, Winnie The Pooh Bear, or even a Care Bear), you are invited to call Nikki at the Teddy Bear Cancer Foundation (805) 962-7466.

PHOTO CAPTION:

A) Nikki Simon, founder and Executive Director of the Teddy Bear Cancer Foundation, with her inspiration

B) Nikki Simon and The Grizzlies outside Moby Dick, as of April 30: (from right) Cox Communications Director of Public Relations David Edelman, Santa Barbara

Chamber of Commerce President Steve Engles, real estate bigwig Keith Berry, architect Henry Lenny, Goleta Valley Hospital President Earl Armstrong, President of the Hutton Foundation Tom Parker, President of Santa Barbara Foundation Chuck Slosser, Attorney and Old Spanish Days El Presidente-Elect Chip Wullbrandt, Attorney Rob Egenolf, Mr. Santa Barbara Larry Crandell, and Executive Director Santa Barbara Chamber of Commerce Steve Cushman (not present: Eloy Ortega of Business First National Bank, and Derek Carlson of MarBorg)