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# Kudos to Cohn, Infineon for fundraising feats

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As we gear up to say goodbye to 2011, two notable milestones deserve attention. Both relate to exceptional feats of philanthropy and both have a significant impact on the lives of Sonoma Valley residents.

This year marks the 25th anniversary of Bruce Cohn's entry into the fundraising ranks. In 1986, Cohn and his producer/PR maven Michael Coats, brainstormed a celebrity golf tournament for the Sonoma Valley. The result was the first B.R. Cohn Celebrity Golf Classic, held at the Sonoma Golf Club. Members of the Doobies, Night Ranger and the San Francisco 49ers showed up and together they raised a whopping \$500 for the Sonoma Community Center. The roots of a tradition were planted.

The event continued as a golf tournament for six years, with fundraising totals ranging from \$2,000 to \$10,000. Then, for year seven, Cohn and Coats put on the first B.R. Cohn music concert at Sonoma Valley High School, with Graham Nash, Nicolette Larson and members of Little Feat. Bill Lynch editorialized in the Index-Tribune, "We taught the children well," and \$14,000 was raised for the SVHS Boosters Club.

By year nine, the one-day concert was moved to a new amphitheater at B.R. Cohn Winery, with annual proceeds ranging from \$20,000 to \$70,000. Then, in 2005 - on the heels of Hurricane Katrina - a second performance day was added and the weekend raised a staggering \$400,000.

The next year, Willie Nelson appeared, along with Michael McDonald, performing with the Doobies again, and that year's concert also generated about \$400,000. In 2009, the legendary super-band Journey performed at B.R. Cohn and the weekend proceeds hit a record \$430,000. This year, for Cohn's 25th anniversary, the concert weekend raised another \$400,000.

Over the years, including Doobie Brothers support for veterans, Bruce Cohn has been the engine behind more than \$6 million in charitable support, benefitting countless Sonoma Valley nonprofits and enriching the lives of thousands of Valley citizens.

Meanwhile, at Infineon Raceway, another fundraising engine crossed a notable finish line, and on Nov. 30, the Sonoma Chapter of Speedway Children's Charities marked its first decade by distributing \$273,000 to 38 youth groups in Sonoma County, including 10 organizations in the Sonoma Valley. With that, the 10-year total for Speedway Children's Charities at Infineon topped \$3.9 million.

The 2011 distribution was generated through a combination of events held during the raceway's major-event weekends, including the Children's Champions Grand Marshal's Banquet and the KFOX Race & Rock Charity Auction, which combined to raise more than \$85,000. Both were held during the NASCAR Sprint Cup Series weekend in June. The seventh annual Classic Sports Racing Group's Charity Challenge generated an additional \$42,000.

Like the Cohn charity events, Speedway Children's Charities began with the vision of one man, Bruton Smith, chairman of Speedway Motorsports Inc., who founded his charity in 1984 at Charlotte Motor Speedway in North Carolina

Since then, Infineon has emerged as a national model for sustainable racetrack management and giving back to the community.

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