



Photos by Ed Krebs

Students Ali Baker, Chelsea and Marley Dorenfeld presented Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton with a hand-made blanket on Saturday at a fundraiser organized by friend Terry Baker, second from right, and host Steve Gromet.

White House Hopeful Connects With Supporters

By ANDREA ADELSON

New York's Senator Hillary Clinton breezed into town on Saturday amid the city's Patriots Day Parade for a private, \$2,000 per person fundraising event, the first declared Democratic candidate for president of the United States to tap a community generous to politicians.

Due in next is New Mexico's Democratic Gov. Bill Richardson, expected at a \$500 per person fundraiser on March 21 at another private Laguna Beach home, according to the host. And next Friday, March

16, just south of town at the St. Regis, supporters of presidential hopeful Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney will be paying \$2,300 to meet him in person.

About a dozen antiwar

protestors picketed outside last Saturday's affair while about 80 people attended the 90-minute Clinton get-together in the hillside home of Rona and Stevan Gromet. Mayor Tom Iseman and

school principals Don Austin and Joanne Culverhouse also attended.

Clinton friends and local

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Council Struggles with Vision for Village Entrance

By RANDY KRAFT

City Council grappled with the complexities of planning the proposed village entrance at the intersection of Laguna Canyon Road and Forest Avenues, and agreed on Tuesday

only to separately submit their concerns and priorities to city staff for consolidation, with further discussion at the April 17 meeting.

"We as a council need to sit down and create a more specific

entrance. However council members Cheryl Kinsman and Kelly Boyd oppose bond funding.

"I will never vote for a bond," Boyd said. "I want the community to represent themselves on a

Ali Baker and Chelsea and Marley Donenfeld presented Clinton with a flag-themed fleece blanket they had assembled the night before with the help of their mother, Joncie Donenfeld. "Because you wrapped yourself around the country with your work and efforts, we thought the country should be wrapped around you," Marley told Clinton, who rewarded her with a kiss. "It was really neat," said Mrs. Donenfeld.

Laguna Beach is a favorite haven of candidates, who received \$1.2 million in contributions from



Photos by Ed Krebs

Rona and Stevan Gromet with New York Senator Hillary Clinton.

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residents Marlene and Terry Baker, the latter an appointee to the Clinton campaign's Southern California finance committee, organized the event. He expects to hold up to six more equally low-key fundraisers before November 2008.

"It's not about publicity, but getting the message out to supporters," said Canadian-born Baker, who anticipated Clinton's presidential aspirations and became a citizen in 2004 so he could cast his vote for her.

Baker prefers to organize small events that allow people to interact directly with the candidate, who is passionate about issues and inevitably wins people over. "I've never had anyone say this was a waste of time. It's always the complete opposite," Baker said. "She's her own person. She's not in the shadow of her husband."

Among the guests, he said, were several Republicans. "They said to me point blank, 'she may have swayed me'," Baker said, declining to name names. "They couldn't wait to get in line to get their picture taken with her."

Host Stevan Gromet, a self-described conservative Republican and like Clinton, a Yale law school graduate, surprised guests with his

introduction. "I am looking for pure, transcendent, charismatic leadership," Gromet said, adding that he listened with a critical ear to the former first lady at an earlier function. "And what I heard from Hillary was an earnest and serious discourse about our country's political ailments, cast in terms and concepts that went beyond party politics," he said in prepared remarks. "So if Hillary and I are two separate dots, her talk last week was definitely a connection between those dots with a bold line."

Clinton spoke for about 30 minutes and answered questions about the war in Iraq, normalizing relations with Iran and the No Child Left Behind law. Guests, enjoying donated treats from Newport Beach's Event Loft, were invited to greet the candidate and take pictures in a receiving line on the outdoor patio, which overlooked a canyon.

At her turn, Kloke, who had just returned from a trip to Yellowstone, urged Clinton to continue to support the national park system. "She was generous with her time. She was not hurried in any way," Kloke said.

Clinton was presented a patriotic memento prior to her departure by motorcade to John Wayne Airport and her widely covered appearance the next day

the city during the 2006 election cycle, according to Opensecrets.org, a website on campaign spending.

Hillary Clinton was among the top 10 recipients, receiving \$28,000 in 2006 from Laguna Beach residents. The Republican National Committee, though, was the largest recipient from the zip code, receiving \$223,000 for the same period, according to Opensecrets.org.

New Mexico's governor, hoping to tap into the community's financial support, will be the guest of Yvette and Steve Dobbie, who have become Richardson friends as part-time Sante Fe residents.

"We're not political people," Mrs. Dobbie said, adding that her husband is a lifelong Republican. Even so, they contributed \$1,500 towards Richardson's successful November 2006 campaign, when he was reelected for a second four-year term as governor. Richardson declared his presidential aspirations in January. "We were hoping," Dobbie said. "We adore him. He's a moderate, a doer, he's charming and he knows how to get things done."

They expect about 75 guests to attend the \$500 per person cocktail party fundraiser, but invite anyone interested in attending to call for more information at 715-1501.