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Tipping Point holds its annual breakfast

Catherine Bigelow Updated 3:12 am, Sunday, December 23, 2012

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Holiday Heroes honorary co-chair Patricia Loucks (left) with Giants reliever Jeremy Affeldt and Wender Weis founder Amy Wender-Hoch at AT&T Park. Photo: Catherine Bigelow, Special To The Chronicle



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There aren't many events we attend in the early-morning hours. But the poverty-fighting work provided by the Tipping Point Community, led by founder-CEO Daniel Lurie, always rings our bell.

So at 8 a.m. Dec. 6, we landed at the Julia Morgan Ballroom, where Tipping Point hosted its sixth Awards Breakfast, presenting inspirational stories and \$50K checks

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honoring three of its grantees - UCSF Child Trauma Research Program Director Dr. **Alicia Lieberman**, Rocketship Education co-founder **Preston Smith** and Year Up Bay Area founder **Jay Banfield**.

Matthew Kahn accepted Tipping Point's Partner Award on behalf of law firm **Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher**, which provides the organization with pro bono legal work.

The organization has grown mightily in its scant seven years. Its board now boasts 17 members, who finance all of TP's operational costs. And it's a deck stacked with innovators: Microsoft's Skype Division President **Tony Bates**; Founders Den co-founder **Zachary Bogue**; financial wizards **Egon Durban**, **Chris James**, **David Lamond**, **Thomas Laffont**, **David Zierk** and TP board President **Alec Perkins**; Green for All CEO **Phaedra Ellis-Lamkins**; philanthropists **Katie Schwab Paige**, **Gina Peterson**, **Eric Roberts** and **Kate Harbin Clammer**; NFL Hall of Famer **Ronnie Lott**; 49ers President **Jed York** and 49ers Chief Strategist **Gideon Yu**; and Lurie.

"Tipping Point doesn't just hand us a check and say, 'We'll see you in a year,' " said Preston Smith, whose Rocketship charter schools are among the newest grantees. "It's a real partnership, real advocacy. It's like being part of a family."

Banfield, a former Oracle biz-dev manager and director of **S.F. Parks Trust**, launched his technology and business communications training for young adults in 2008, partly inspired by the fact that his own family thrived from the public assistance it once needed.

"If you don't have hope and opportunity, why would you work hard at something? Why would you believe in something? Why would you reach out and help others?" he asked. "Usually within four months of Year Up training, 87 percent of our grads are gainfully employed."

Heroes welcome: In its largest-ever edition, the **Wender Weis Foundation for Children's Holiday Heroes** fundraiser Dec. 3 required AT&T Park's cavernous confines to host 1,100 merrymakers to Santa-style cheer.

Founded by **Amy Wender-Hoch**, the festive fete featured crafts, games and hot dogs for kids of all ages who mingled with sports heroes Olympic skier **Jonny Moseley**, Oakland Raiders **Marcel Reece** and **Matt Giordano**, 49er **Isaac Sopoaga**, the San Jose Earthquakes' **Sam Cronin** and the Giants' **Jeremy Affeldt**.

The evening raised \$100K for Junior Giants Baseball, as well as the 49er Foundation, Children of Shelters, **Raphael House** and the **S.F. Child Abuse Prevention Center**.

And it raised the spirits of 400 underserved shelter youths who were the foundation's guests.

"The children attending from our charities blend right in," said Wender, who founded her organization in 1994. "And everyone has a really wonderful time."

Catherine Bigelow is The San Francisco Chronicle's society correspondent. missbigelow@sfgate.com

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