

EVENTS/CAUSES

## Ritz-Carlton gets radical with Surfing Santa Competition

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*Ritz-Carlton Laguna Niguel*

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By FORREST CARDAMENIS

The Ritz-Carlton, Laguna Niguel, CA, is taking a stand for individuals with autism during its annual Holiday Surfboard Auction and Surfing Santa Competition.

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**Luxury Daily**

Proceeds from both the Surfing Santa Competition, which takes place at Salt Creek Beach on Saturday, Nov. 21, and the Holiday Surfboard Auction, which opens online the same day and runs through the end of 2015, will benefit Surfers Healing, a foundation that has put on free events for children with autism since 1999. Hotels are increasingly putting efforts into charity and other causes to establish themselves as pillars of their communities.

"These types of events are part of The Ritz-Carlton Community Footprints," said Deanne French, director of public relations, [Ritz-Carlton, Laguna Niguel, CA](#). "Community Footprints was created to encourage leadership in volunteerism, fundraising, product donations and mentoring programs at a local level.

"No project is considered too large or too small," she said. "Dedicated Ritz-Carlton ladies and gentlemen provide a wide range of support and services to their community,

including fund-raising for local charities, reading to the blind, preparing and serving lunches at homeless shelters, donating books to schools and volunteering at food banks.

"The Ritz-Carlton Community Footprints stresses that the most important resource is not always money, but time."

Twin fin

The Surfing Santa Competition requires a \$50 entry fee, but all contestants are eligible for a \$1,000 Big Air prize and the best-costumed participant will win a Carver Skateboard. It is divided into five separate divisions that make the event viable for children and adults of all ages and genders.



### *Surfing Santas*

"We typically have competitors ranging in age from 7 to 47," Ms. French said. "It is an event that is fun for surfers of all ages."

The surfboards on auction will be on display at the Ritz-Carlton, Laguna Niguel throughout the holiday season and include boards designed by acclaimed artists and previously owned or used by renowned surfers.



*Surfboards for auction*

This is the sixth year for the Surfing Santa Competition and the eighth for the auction, which have collectively raised more than \$200,000 for Surfer's Healing. The event's locality is emphasized through the Surfer's Healing organization and the events' annual nature.

"Because Surfers Healing was founded right here in Southern California, most of the surfers in the competition personally know [Surfers Healing founders] Izzy and Danielle and are extremely supportive of the amazing work they do for children with autism," Ms. French said.



*Surfers on the water*

By putting on a successful and close-knit event, Ritz-Carlton solidifies itself as a pillar of the community that shares the values and contributes to the same causes as guests and locals.

Party wave

This is not even the first time this week that Ritz-Carlton has demonstrated its dedication to its local communities.

For instance, the chain's New Orleans resort is cementing itself as a community mainstay by commemorating the tenth anniversary of Hurricane Katrina with a new art installation.

Titled “Reflections on Recovery” and curated by local artist Kit Wohl, the display, which will be open to the public through October, is hosted in the hotel’s gallery space and consists of a number of mirrors that read “Reflections on Recovery” in gold decal. The installation therefore enshrines New Orleans residents and guests as crucial to the recovery effort and reminds the community how far it has come in the 10 years since the hurricane ([see story](#)).

Ritz-Carlton is not the only hotel chain turning an eye toward worthy causes.

Just last week, The Peninsula Hotels announced that they are looking to raise awareness about breast cancer for the fifth straight year through a new initiative that will remind its consumers to think pink.

“The Art of Pink” will bring specially commissioned pink-inspired artwork by internationally acclaimed artists to Peninsula hotels throughout the world this October in recognition of Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Through the initiative, Peninsula will bring attention to the fight to end cancer and reaffirm the brand’s commitment to this cause ([see story](#)).

The Surfing Santa Competition and surfboard auction will help Ritz-Carlton maintain strong ties with their communities.

“These types of events connect the resort with the local community and truly represent our commitment and passion for making a difference and giving back,” Ms. French said.

Final Take

*Forrest Cardamenis, editorial assistant on Luxury Daily, New York*

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