

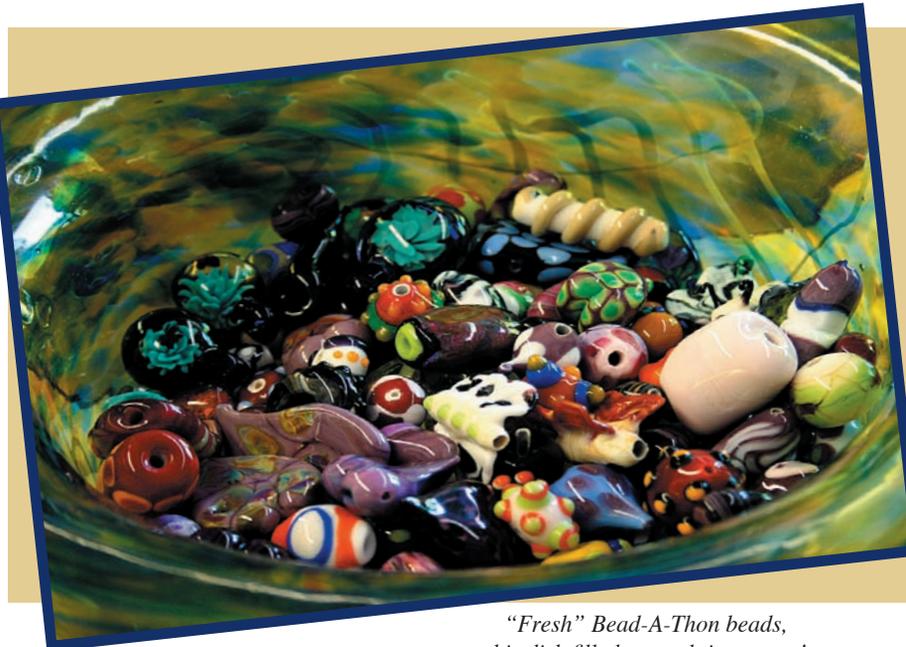
# First Annual Bead-A-Thon



by Marin J. Bey and Margaret Zinser

*Friday night Bead-A-Thon beadmakers*

**W**hen we make art, we put our energy into the pieces as we create them. As a group, our collective creative energy becomes greater than the sum of its parts. It is with that intention that glass artists came together at the First Annual Bead-A-Thon creating beads to provide arts-in-medicine support to children coping with serious illness. The Bead-A-Thon is a collaborative fundraising and service event created by two Tucson-based nonprofits, the Sonoran Glass Art Academy ([www.sonoranglass.org](http://www.sonoranglass.org)) and Beads of Courage ([www.beadsofcourage.net](http://www.beadsofcourage.net)).



*"Fresh" Bead-A-Thon beads, this dish filled several times over!*

## Our Story

The connection between Beads of Courage and Sonoran Glass Art Academy (SGAA) was fostered by Margaret Zinser. As part of the Board of Directors at SGAA, Margaret wanted to use the flame studio as a tool for community building. SGAA, now in its eighth year, works to enrich the desert Southwest's community by providing a supportive environment in which glass artists, students, and enthusiasts come together and share knowledge through craftsmanship.

The Beads of Courage, Inc., program made for an obvious choice. The organization uses beads to provide children with a tangible narrative to symbolize their experiences during cancer treatment. A committee of organizers formed early in the summer of 2008 and set the Bead-A-Thon for September 12 and 13 to be held in conjunction with National Childhood Cancer Awareness Month. Margaret and Jean Baruch, Executive Director and Founder of Beads of Courage, headed the committee with support from Alexandra Berger, SGAA Office Manager; David Klein, SGAA Director; and Marin J. Bey, SGAA Volunteer Coordinator. This team effort resulted in the seamless realization of the goals for both organizations.

## The Beads

Pledges for the Bead-A-Thon from our generous sponsors determined the beadmaking goals. Teams of Beadmakers were supported by these team sponsors, including several Tucson Kiwanis clubs. We focused on the four core treatment milestones: Act of Courage, Bone Marrow Transplant, Purple Heart, and Butterfly Beads. Artisan beads are given for these milestones because of the considerable strength and endurance children demonstrate before receiving them.

Our biggest triumph of the weekend was the enormous pile of Purple Heart Beads, which are chosen by children upon completion of treatment. We celebrated making each Purple Heart, understanding how powerful it is for a child to earn it. Butterflies are the bereavement piece given to families to complete their child's strand. Despite the jovial atmosphere of the weekend, making Butterfly beads brought quiet moments of contemplation. Between celebration in making Purple Hearts and contemplation, we made Acts of Courage and Bone Marrow Transplant beads to commemorate extraordinary moments of courage during treatment.



Top: Nannette Charif of Tucson, Arizona  
 Above: Margaret Zinser, Dave Klein, and Terry Bendt

The Bead-A-Thon, in addition to providing funds and core treatment milestone beads for the Beads of Courage program, provided individual artists with a significant benefit. We cherished the opportunity to be part of honoring children's strength and courage on their journey to wellness. Working together, sometimes even on the same piece in our "Round Table Challenges," further helped to feed our local community of glass artists.

## The Event

Bead artists made beads for twenty-four hours over the course of two days. Thirty artists from around Southern Arizona worked in teams, taking shifts on eight continuously running torches, making over 600 beads. Beadmakers earned prizes for taking part in beadmaking challenges throughout the weekend. Themed challenges entailed opportunities for beadmakers to explore their own talents. Timed challenges, to further push our techniques, included making as many purple hearts as we could in thirty minutes. The event wasn't just about the beadmaking, however. Supporters came to SGAA to cheer on the artists, enjoy live music, string beads, get a chair massage, and experience great food and great fun.

Fourteen hours of beadmaking on the first day culminated in two lively and dance-filled sets of jazz/indie/funk performed by Tucson band, the Tryst. We were certainly thankful to get our groove on after a long day of torch time! After beadmaking on Saturday, we traded our shop clothes for cocktail attire and moved the celebration from SGAA to Elle Wine Country Restaurant. Our Gala Event included decadent wine and hors d'oeuvres and a live auction with pieces modeled by seventeen beautiful women and one great sport. (Thanks, Mike, for bearing your chest for the cause). Glass jewelry was donated for the live auction by both Bead-A-Thon beadmakers and other artists from as far away as Germany. We raised \$15,000, enabling both organizations to continue realizing their missions. Look forward to the 2009 Bead-A-Thon and consider joining us for next year's event!

Last but certainly not least, a huge thank-you to all who were involved with the Bead-A-Thon—volunteers, beadmakers, and sponsors! Without your support and generosity, an event like this could not have happened.



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If you're interested in hosting a Bead-A-Thon in your area, please contact Margaret Zinser ([mz@mzglass.com](mailto:mz@mzglass.com)) or Jean Baruch ([jbaruch@beadsofcourage.net](mailto:jbaruch@beadsofcourage.net)).



Bead-A-Thon organizers Left to Right: Alexandra Berger, David Klein, Jean Baruch, Margaret Zinser, Marin J. Bey

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