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By Jonathan Gregg

Sun Correspondent

An estimated several hundred people turned out Thursday night for the annual Rotary club scholarship fundraiser at Red Rock Park.

The keynote speaker was longtime NFL referee Ed Hochuli. Most NFL fans would recognize the name, but for the casual fan, he's the one that has biceps of steel, wears his tight-fitting number 85 jersey, and likes to explain the simplest penalties in a length that would rival War and Peace in length.

He also happens to be one of the most distinguished referees in the NFL, having officiated two Super Bowls, and in 2008 was voted the "best referee" in an ESPN poll.

However, what isn't widely known is that Hochuli is also a great speaker. He led off the night with a hilarious story where when he was a child he asked his dad, "Dad, was I adopted?"

And his dad replied, "yes son' you were ... but 6 months later they brought you back." The audience was roaring, and an enthralling speech followed.

As Rotary Club Committee Chair for the Speakers Banquet, or as most of us know him "Sammy C" Chioda said, "remember, the speaker is not the reason we are here, scholarships are the reason we are here."

And that really was the story of the night, the amazing turnout not only from Gallup, but from Albuquerque, Colorado, Arizona, and throughout the Southwest and beyond.

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There were representatives from many local businesses and entities, including representatives from the Armed Forces, Navajo Nation, Duke City Gladiators (Albuquerque's professional indoor football team), and James Malm, CEO of UNM-Gallup.

When asked why he believed in what the Rotary club was doing, Malm said "I am an educator ... this is not just for a charity, but a charity to help our students pursue education, which makes it doubly special to me."

Read the full story in the Gallup Sun's Feb. 16 issue.



NFL referee shares endearing stories, importance of education at annual Rotary scholarship banquet

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