

denver & the west

Crooner goes step beyond for "Cure"

Lee Greenwood raises \$10,000 by auctioning one of his platinum albums.

By Manny Gonzales
The Denver Post

Article Last Updated: 10/05/2007 02:44:27 AM MDT



Lee Greenwood performs "God Bless the USA" for new U.S. citizens after they took the oath of allegiance at a naturalization ceremony at Walt Disney World in Lake Buena Vista, Florida, July 4, 2007. A thousand people were naturalized during the event. (Getty / Matt Strohane)

Patriotic crooner Lee Greenwood went above and beyond the call of duty for breast-cancer research Thursday night when he surprised everyone at the eighth annual Men for the Cure Dinner at Invesco Field at Mile High by personally

auctioning off one of his platinum albums.

It was the first time Greenwood had performed in Denver since his much-ballyhooed flap for refusing to perform a concert last month.

Event attendees opened their hearts and wallets for him. His framed 2001 album "American Patriot" fetched \$10,000 from investment banker Joseph Durnford.

"I'm just a big fan of America," Durnford said, grinning ear to ear.

Greenwood, who performed several songs, including his trademark "God Bless the USA," also rallied attendees to sing happy birthday for event co-founder Sharon Magness Blake.

"Whatever I can do to help this event," Greenwood said afterward. "Few cities do this kind of event by men for the women in their lives, and it's really special."

Greenwood's image had been tarnished in local circles for his walkout on a scheduled performance at a musical salute to the military, police and firefighters because of a contract dispute with organizers.

Thursday night he was upstaged only by the generosity of donors for the men's event, which drew about 700 men from around the area to contribute money for breast-cancer research at the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center.

Thursday night's dinner brought the total raised to \$1 million. As a result, CU is naming its breast-cancer research center after Diane O'Connor Thompson - the wife of the event's co-founder, Jeff Thompson - who died from breast cancer in 1999.

Jeff Thompson fought through tears and was grateful for the honor. "It's actually kind of staggering when you think of it," he said. "Thanks a million."

Manny Gonzales: 303-954-1537 or
mgonzales@denverpost.com