

# BARBARA BUSH'S CELEBRATION OF READING

## Written word is key to benefit's success

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DAVE ROSSMAN FOR THE CHRONICLE

Former President George H.W. Bush and Barbara Bush flank Celebration of Reading authors Cherie Blair and Jon Meacham at the Hobby Center.

Even in its 15th year, **Barbara Bush's** Celebration of Reading remains one of the most popular and most entertaining fundraisers in the city.

Witness the recent benefit for the Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy and the Barbara Bush Texas Fund for Family Literacy — 1,700 guests packed the Hobby Center for the Performing Arts and contributed \$1.85 million to literacy coffers.

The loyalty of Celebration of Reading fans is rewarded each year with witty, poignant and salient contributions from well-known authors and from the Bush family. Former President **George H.W. Bush** is a steadfast contributor to the program.

He introduced a surprise video tribute to Barbara Bush, whose literacy work was honored throughout the evening. The Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy celebrates its 20th anniversary this year.

Entertaining literacy supporters with their observations and readings were guest authors **Ted Bell, Cherie Blair, Christopher Buckley, Julia Reed** and **Jon Meacham**, who won a Pulitzer Prize only days before for his biography *American Lion: Andrew Jackson in the White House*.

The big surprise of the evening, and there always is one, was as much a surprise to Barbara Bush as to the audience. Thirteen members of the Bush family's younger generation came from across the country and gathered onstage to pay tribute to "Ganny." It so caught the honoree off guard and so pleased her that she shed tears — something we are told almost never happens.