Rita Hayworth gala

More than 900 guests filled two Hilton Chicago ballrooms on May 11 for the 26th annual Chicago Rita Hayworth Gala.

The black-tie event, which benefited the Alzheimer’s Association, began with a reception and silent auction in the Grand Ballroom and continued in the International Ballroom with dinner and a live performance by Grammy award-winning singer/songwriter Richard Marx.

The event was co-chaired by Debbie Mendelson Ponn, Sharon and Scott Markman and Blythe and David Mendelson.

A video montage featured people whose lives have been affected by Alzheimer’s.

“Alzheimer’s is growing at a much quicker pace than it did 10 years ago,” Ponn said. “It’s not your grandmother’s disease. The face of Alzheimer’s today is the face of the entire family.”

David Moscicki accepted the Civic Award on behalf of his family: Linda Moscicki, Jennifer and Steven Rittmaster and Leslie and David McGraw.

The Medical and Scientific Award was presented to Dr. John C. Morris.

“The studies ongoing now will allow us to prevent Alzheimer’s disease,” Morris said. “I hope one day you will put me out of work.”

Richard Kipper and Thomas Irvin accepted the Corporate Award on behalf of Guggenheim Partners.

Princess Yasmin Aga Khan established the Rita Hayworth Galas to pay tribute to her mother, Rita Hayworth, who lived with the disease for many years before her death in 1987. She thanked the co-chairs and board and presented a birthday cake to her “mentor,” Jerome Stone, founder of the Alzheimer’s Association. He had turned 100.

The event raised more than $1.5 million, setting a record for the Alzheimer’s Association Chicago Rita Hayworth Gala. Beginning in New York in 1984, these galas have raised more than $60 million for the association’s care, support and research programs.