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Hospital gala a resounding success

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Organizers say entertainment, food sensational

By B.J. Fairchild-Newman
Staff writer

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The theme of Saturday's Major Hospital Foundation gala event was "sense-sational," and from all reports, the adjective provided a perfect description. The best news of the evening was a profit of more than \$30,000 to benefit the foundation.

"It was indeed sensational," said Hospital Foundation executive director Angela Gill. "Our 320 guests seemed to have a wonderful time, and it was so good to see all of our hard work pay off in that way."

The evening at Indiana Downs included dance music by the Gust Spenos Quartet, which has provided the entertainment for the last three foundation fundraisers, and jazz vocalist Everett Greene returned with his mellow tones.

"He is such a gentleman and so charming, and when he turns on that beautiful bass/baritone voice, every woman in the room falls in love," Gill said.

Spenos, who is a neurologist at Major Hospital, also booked jazz legend Red Holloway, 83, for the event. He had just returned from a gig in Spain on Saturday afternoon.

"He brought forth belly-laughs from the crowd with a double entendre sing-along with the audience shouting out 'yes, yes,' and 'yes, yes, yes' on cue," Gill said. "He can still beat out the younger guys with his saxophone."

Gill described the food by Indiana Downs Chef Greg Schiesser as "terrific" with two entrees on each plate accompanied with sautéed pickled sea beans, and dessert was creme brulee cheesecake.

"Chef Greg is an expert in matching food and wine, and he really outdid himself on Saturday," Gill said. "Everyone at Indiana Downs was so accommodating to our needs and went above and beyond in making sure things ran smoothly."

This year's silent auction was a resounding success, tripling the income from last year to pull in \$12,000. Gill said that the use of a hand-held silent auction bidding device was a big hit and helped to increase the bidding by building excitement. The BidPal system even gave guests the option of paying a premium for an auction item and purchasing it instantly without going through the bidding process.

A one-carat un-set diamond from Reis-Nichols in Indianapolis was won in a raffle by hospital employee Mona Bernard.

"For once in her life, Mona was speechless," Gill said. "I loved seeing her win."

Each guest also received a 20 percent off coupon from the jeweler.



Event co-chairwoman (from left) Dr. Carrie Pumphrey, Major Hospital Foundation executive director Angela Gill and foundation board member Jill Shammass present Mona Bernard (second from right) with the one-carat diamond that she won through a raffle at Saturday's fundraiser at Indiana Downs. Submitted photo

Gill even turned a profit on the "asymmetrical lighted black tower" decorations and the centerpieces — vases filled with Aquagems, or gel marbles, and a battery pack on the top that provided a six-foot string of lights held up by a 30-inch diameter helium balloon.

"It provided an otherworldly effect and people loved it," she added. "It was an unplanned bonus to sell all the decorations."

Gill was full of compliments for her co-chairwomen for the gala, Carrie Pumphrey and Susan Kent, and she said that there were many volunteers during the night of the event as well as the two days needed to set up at Indiana Downs.

"I want this gala to be known as one where guests are guaranteed to have a good time. In fact, if something didn't go well for a guest, I want to know about it so we can learn for next year. Will we do it again next year? You bet."

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