

## Banking on a few visionaries

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There are honorees and there are honorees. To its credit, the Midwest Eye-Bank Chicago lassoed a couple that have no equals when it come to numbers of friends, good works performed and devotion to family.

Gibson's owner Steve Lombardo and his wife, Peggy, welcomed more than 200 pals to the ballroom of the Ritz-Carlton Hotel last weekend for cocktails, a silent auction, dinner and dancing to the music of Stanley Paul and his orchestra.

Beverly Blettner, Dori Wilson and Sun-Times columnist Bill Zwecker co-chaired the evening, with Zwecker also handling the emcee duties. Blettner missed the party when a fall earlier in the day kept her at home.

Eva Sturgis gave her personal perspective on the receipt of three corneas from the Midwest Eye-Bank Chicago, and then its president and CEO, Florence M. Johnston, presented the Lombardos with the 2004 Man and Woman of Vision Award.

After a yummy dinner of lobster and shrimp, beef tenderloin and a trio of desserts, guests packed the dance floor till the wee hours. Attending were John and Marty Higgins, Gene McCaffrey, Mary Ann Rose and Heinz Kern, Bill and Vicki Hood, Russ Salzman, Martin Gapshis, Daniel Nack, Linda and Mark Heister, Nena Ivon, Greg Hyder, Jim Kinney, Peter Martino, Kathy Piccone, Ken Norgan, Robert Allegrini and Christina Bomben, Richard Driehaus, Fred and Julie Latsko, Melody Hobson, Neal Zucker and Candace and Chuck Jordan.

With silent auction donors such as jeweler Tony White, Burberry, Ferragamo, Tiffany & Co. and more, it's easy to see why the monies raised for the evening exceeded \$65,000.

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You don't have to be Jewish to fall in love with Basel & Balfour, the newest gem in George Jewell's catering empire!

Along with partners Daniel Nack and Velvel Tikarskiy, Jewell has launched a kosher catering company that combines his unsurpassed standard of excellence with strict adherence to the Jewish dietary laws of kashruth.

At a lavish kickoff party in the penthouse of the newly refurbished Hotel 71 on East Wacker, Basel & Balfour introduced its cuisine to an eclectic gathering of wedding planners, party professionals, representatives of Chicago's Orthodox Jewish community and members of Chicago's social elite.

About 200 guests dined on delicacies such as noisette of lamb with Cumberland sauce and braised poussin in rosemary, garlic and white wine glaze. Even a mainstay of Jewish cooking, the lowly knish, was redefined as elegant cuisine with a filling of potato and dill with smoked salmon and red cabbage.

Each course drew raves from the diners, many of whom said they had never tasted kosher food so spectacularly prepared and lavishly presented.

In welcoming the crowd, Nack apologized that "Mr. Basel" and "Mr. Balfour" were unable to be present -- before admitting that the corporate name was strictly a fictional invention of

the principals.

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It must have been the spring-like weather last Friday that prompted several hundred guests to pack the lower level of 900 N. Michigan for a look at the new Equinox Fitness Club. Anticipating the arrival of bikini weather, many of the guests examined the scores of machines designed to get bodies toned and in shape for summer.

Harvey Spevak, the club's CEO, flew in from New York for the opening party, which benefitted Gateway Green, and took a turn assuming some interesting positions with the group's chair, Jerry Roper, and Grant dePorter. Eventually, the club will have locations in Lincoln Park, 900 N. Michigan and Highland Park. "It's our hope," said Spevak, "to improve people's daily lives through our fitness programs."

Hand balancers and the Lyra Aerialists from the Actor's Gym dazzled partygoers with their routines on the floor, on trapeze and on large rings suspended 15 feet above the ground. The club's own Extreme Yoga team also slithered around and helped guests imagine what they could do with a few hours of coaching.

Pomtinis (pomegranate juice and vodka) were served along with Moroccan spiced lamb, beef tenderloin, chorizo corn fritters and other delicacies, and more than \$10,000 was raised for continuing programs to beautify the city of Chicago.

**Caption:** Bill Zwecker and Dori Wilson. Julie and Fred Latsko. Steve and Peggy Lombardo. An aerialist at the Equinox Fitness Club opening. Grant dePorter with an unnamed balancer. Harvey Spevak and Jerry Roper with members of the Equinox staff. Scott Stewart

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