



Alex Montague, first VP-Investments, Merrill Lynch, and wife Maria Alonso, senior VP, Bank of America.



Douglas McPherson, VP of JP Morgan Private Bank; with Diane LaRoe and Mark LaRoe, managing director, JP Morgan Private Bank.



Vincent Tria Jr., senior VP, Bank of America, and wife Barbara Tria, commercial broker with Kerdyk realty.

Arts and philanthropy unite to support Lotus House Shelter

By RISA POLANSKY

As a testament to — and to further ensure — its staying power in the community, the Lotus House Shelter this weekend launched an endowment fund at its third annual contemporary art auction fundraiser.

The event drew close to 400 people “from the art world, from the philanthropic world coming together to support the Lotus House women’s center,” said Constance Collins, president of the Sundari Foundation, which operates the transitional housing shelter of which she is founder and director.

In “launching our endowment for the first time ever, it is our hope to see the Lotus House serving generations of women and children to come,” she said. “With government funding being so uncertain, we need to have a source of financial stability for the future.”

Martin Margulies, who hosted the event in his Wynwood art warehouse, agreed that “now, especially with all the government cuts and budget problems, somebody has got to step up” — and he did, contributing \$500,000 to the endowment.

Ms. Collins announced also her gift of the property the shelter sits on, 217 NW 15th St., to the endowment “so it houses the shelter in perpetuity,” she said.

Because the organization has been a “proven success,” said Marti Mang, senior vice president of corporate lending for TotalBank and foundation treasurer, “the time is right” to launch an endowment.

“The Lotus House has been here long enough now,” she said. “We have a good track record.”

A recent success, Ms. Collins said, has been the shelter’s new maternity wing.

The wing houses pregnant women as well as their children, and since March, she said, eight newborns have joined the community.

It was reasons like this Christie’s joined in as a first-time sponsor for the program, said Vivian Pfeiffer, senior vice president and regional director for the art auctioneer.

Ms. Collins “told us about the cause, and nobody could help helping,” she said.

The shelter’s art program is also thriving, said Isabel Moros-Rigau, who runs the program as an adjunct professor with Florida International University.

“Art is self expression,” she said. “The reason that we do it is because it’s a vehicle for the ladies to allow themselves to do something they don’t normally allow themselves to do.”

And art played a central role in Saturday’s fundraiser.

“Art collecting for the ultra-high net worth market is absolutely a passion across the board,” said Mark LaRoe, managing director for JPMorgan Private Bank. “That’s why we’re here supporting Marty and Sundari and Constance.”

The event shows “the community is about supporting contemporary art and the wonderful programs of the Sundari Foundation and Lotus House,” said Bonnie Clearwater, executive director and chief curator for the Museum of Contemporary Art.

The museum is “part of the reason Miami is becoming such an international art center,” she said, along with the Carnival Center for the Performing Arts, private collectors such as Mr. Margulies, “and the artists. We have so many great artists here, we’re now being known inter-



Constance Collins, Sundari Foundation founder and Lotus House director, with Martin Margulies, director of Martin Margulies Center.



Life imitating art: Clara Triay-Moreno and Marti Mang, Sundari Foundation treasurer and TotalBank senior VP-corporate lending.

nationally.”

Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden is to soon exhibit an internationally renowned artist’s work, said Bruce Greer, chairman of the board. The garden next month is to house a Roy Lichtenstein sculpture exhibition, the first time the iconic artist’s work is to be shown in a botanical garden.

In regard to the City of

Miami’s plan to further burgeon the local arts scene by building a new Miami Art Museum in Bicentennial Park, oft-quoted opponent Mr. Margulies clarified he’s not opposed to building a new museum.

“I’m not supportive of the taxpayers putting \$100 million into a museum with no collection on a wonderful piece of waterfront property,” he said.

Some guests cited a need for public dollars elsewhere.

“The county used to pay us \$4.9 million to the Public Health Trust” toward medical care for inmates, said Kathryn Villano, medical director for the Miami-Dade County Corrections. The funding was cut this year, but healthcare must continue to be administered as usual, she said. “It’s an unfunded mandate.”

The money for now comes off the Trust’s bottom line. “It’s a drain on their resources,” she said, but “we just march along, providing for the care that needs to be given.”

One area in which local government has succeeded, said Evelyn Langlieb Greer, School Board member, is tackling homelessness.

“Miami is the national leader in dealing with the homeless problem,” she said, after civic leaders 10 years ago “got together and said ‘we’re going to deal with this problem.’”

Local leaders, she said, are now taking Miami-Dade’s public-private partnership model to cities around the country.

In the private sector, Coral Gables’ commercial real estate market is thriving, said Barbara Tria, a senior commercial associate with Kerdyk Real Estate.

“The Gables has been strong,” she said. “Very low vacancy in the office, lots happening on the retail front.”

Epitomizing the trend, architect Burton Hersh, vice president of the Sundari Foundation board, said he’s finishing up work on the new Gables restaurant Por Fin, to open soon at 2500 Ponce de Leon Blvd.

Another project of his design to open soon, he said, is Abokado, a Mexican-sushi fusion restaurant in Mary Brickell Village.



David Rico, a visitor from New York, and Isabel Moros-Rigau, FIU instructor for Lotus art program.



Sydney Cohen, secretary for Lotus House and Sundari Foundation, and Dahlia Morgan, director emeritus of the FIU Frost Art Museum.



Dr. Kathryn Villano, medical director for Miami-Dade Corrections, and architect Burton Hersh, Sundari VP.