

First Annual FFBC Red Valentine Party a Success



When entering through the large old double doors of the Hoyt Sherman Mansion February 1 guests were treated by the sound of Grant Baetz fingers dancing across the ivories of the old grand Steinway in the back parlor. Jazz filled the rooms. The magnificent piano could be heard throughout the two galleries and the mansion. Plumes of red feathers flourished in the entryway and around the room as you entered the historic Hoyt Sherman Place. The feathers introduced you to the main theme of red with dapples of black and white Polka dots that added a fresh and lively mood to the wonderful old galleries. Stuart Alexander, One Source Event Productions, had transformed the space with spandex, roses and uplighted table vases filled with roses, lilies, and small red and white orchards donated by Forist Distributing Inc. The First Annual Red Valentine Party of the First Friday Breakfast Club was under way and looked wonderful.



The Party was planned to raise funds for the Scholarships the FFBC gives to high school seniors. \$2,500 Scholarships will be awarded without bias to gender identity or sex. Over 75 scholarships have been awarded over the past 10 years to students from all around Iowa according to Jonathan Wilson, President of FFBC. "The scholarships are awarded in June and are the highlight of the breakfast club's year." These are students who have contributed the most to reduce homophobia and/ or increase awareness and tolerance of gay and lesbian issues.

A Best Dressed in Red Contest, or undressed in Red, added to the festiveness as did a Chinese Auction. John Hallstrom Photography captured many of those in attendance whose dress warmed the rooms further with splashes of red in their clothes. The guests nibbled on prime rib sandwiches, divine little shish kabobs and desserts that were catered by Brown Bag Deli. These were not served in brown bags. Wine and beer donated by the Blazing Saddle and Club Impulse met most everyone's need for refreshment as 75 to 100 people were introduced to Neil Guiliano, President of GLAAD, the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation and former mayor of Tempe, Arizona for ten years.

Mr. Guiliano has appeared on CNN, ABC World News Tonight, Showbiz Tonight, and Access Hollywood and has been quoted in Newsweek and USA Today and numerous state and regional media outlets discussing LGBT images and issues in the media. He is considered among the nations most visible and effective leaders of the movement for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender equality, earning recognition as one of Instinct Magazine's Top 25 of 2005. He spoke of the Alliance's work but told the group in attendance their presence and support of such events is what will change the heartland of America.



The Scholarship fundraising Committee noted that a few pledges are still outstanding but once all pledges and donations are received \$15,000 will have been raised through the First Annual Red Valentine Party for Scholarships. The party left those in attendance looking forward to the Second Annual already scheduled for Friday, February 6, 2009.



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