

2011-2012
SOCIAL CALENDAR

207 INSPIRING CAUSES

PARTIES OF
THE YEAR

SARASOTA[®]

MAGAZINE

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In a season full of fund-raising fun,
these parties win the

GALA GOLD

BY PAM DANIEL | PHOTOGRAPHY BY REBECCA BAXTER

Sarasota is famous for its creativity, philanthropy and glittering social life, and together those forces have made this one of the greatest party towns on earth. Retired Fortune 500 CEOs, tech entrepreneurs, design stars, artists, young professionals and grande dames come together to produce dazzling events for the causes they care about, pouring an outrageous amount of energy and talent into each and every one.

Their creativity was especially evident this year, as party organizers invented a number of new events, added some high-tech twists and topped it all off with imaginative themes and décor. Perhaps because of the challenging economic times, the mission was the message at many events, conveyed by inspiring speakers or auction items connected to the cause. Guests knew they were partying for a purpose, and that helped to open hearts—and wallets.

But parties also felt younger and more fun than ever, from the increasing use of social media to the whole new generation of chairs and supporters whose fresh ideas (and striking good looks) added to the excitement of the evening.

Our annual “Gala Gold” awards single out the people, parties and innovations that made this such an exciting year. Congratulations to all of our winners, and to the many other supporters and professionals whose creativity and commitment raised so much for so many deserving causes. And welcome to Heather Dunhill, whose “Fashion Statements” in this story are a preview of her new “Who, What, Wear” column and weekly blog, which will kick off next month.

FASHION STATEMENTS



VICTORIA LEOPOLD

If Coco Chanel were still around, she'd choose this exact look for Victoria Leopold's Pique-nique appearance. It's an ultra chic Ralph Lauren shorts suit of white linen with a kinky straw hat, vintage brooch and pearls, of course. It all harkens back to Coco's early boutique days in Biarritz.



CHRIS MALKIN

Never intimidated by combining textile color or patterns, Chris Malkin is one of those guys who gets his style—it's smart but casual and definitely uncomplicated.



BUILDING HOPE GRAND OPENING

BEST PROUD MOMENT

The crowd at the gala celebrating the Cancer Support Community's (formerly the Wellness Community) state-of-the-art new \$6 million Building Hope practically levitated with excitement. This instant landmark, with its soaring arch, was the perfect backdrop for heartfelt speeches, congratulations and dancing under a gorgeous tent.

BEST NEW LUNCHEON

Make-A-Wish's Cooking for Wishes kept 150 guests entertained for two nonstop hours, with a four-course interactive dinner along with auction items and fun tips on cooking and wine sandwiched between courses. Genius touch: The centerpieces holding spatulas priced from \$10 to \$250 allowed everybody to contribute to the cause. The take? Twice what they expected, an impressive \$70,000.

BEST LATE-NIGHT PARTY

For two nights, the Vinyl Fest packed the ballroom and wine cellar at Michael's with close to 1,000 Red-Bull'd young people grooving to the music of a dozen or so different DJ's until after 2 a.m. The festival has folded, but we're betting all that cool and creative energy will somehow surface again this season.



VINYL FEST

DJ FEVER



RINGLING INTERNATIONAL
ARTS FESTIVAL

BEST THRILLING EVENT

The two-year-old Ringling International Arts Festival captures everything great about our town. It celebrates the arts, takes place at the iconic Ringling Museum and attracts a crowd that appreciates the cutting-edge performances. This year, it gave us a once-in-a-lifetime chance to see the great Baryshnikov dance. He was brave, funny, touching and totally unforgettable.