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Ways to Make Waves in Philanthropy

By MARSHALL HEYMAN



Philanthropy happens on so many scales in this city. Some fundraisers that start relatively

small grow, over the course of just a few short years, into something very, very big.

Take, for instance, the Friends of the High Line annual spring benefit. Just a few years ago, before the High Line opened, this party squeezed around 400 people into a boiling-hot auction house. Tuesday's fundraiser brought out nearly 1,000 guests to Skylight at Moynihan Station, among them Catie and Don Marron, Kara and Steve Ross and Pershing Square Capital's Bill Ackman, along with actors Zach Quinto, Lily Rabe, Hamish Linklater and Cynthia Nixon.

At the entrance of this vast, former post office, event designer Bronson van Wyck created a gate of ferns. There was a pool filled with candles in the spare cocktail area. The dining room, if you can call it that, had more than 2,000 pieces of linen hanging from the ceiling, each one water-dyed and splotted in a different way. As various lights in the space changed color, so did the linens. The point, Mr. Van Wyck said, was to evoke a garden that is never finished.

This particular benefit, which honored Piet Oudolf, the High Line's planting designer; Mark Lee, chief executive of Barneys New York; and founding board members Olivia Douglas, Gary Handel, Gifford Miller and Mario Palumbo, raised more than \$3 million.

In comparison, the \$18,000 raised at a dinner the same night at the Meatball Shop for Waves for Water may seem insignificant, but you have to start somewhere. While Friends of the High Line had



Left, chefs Gavin Kaysen and Jamie Bissonnette prepare dishes in the Meatball Shop kitchen for the Waves for Water dinner and fundraiser. Right, Jon Rose and Michael Chernow.

hundreds of guests, the Meatball Shop's Lower East Side location only fit 40: 29 on the floor, and 11 at the bar (around 100 more came for an after-party).

The evening was spearheaded by Michael Chernow, a co-owner, with Daniel Holzman, of the local meatball chain. After superstorm Sandy hit, Mr. Chernow did a lot of work in the Rockaways coordinating and preparing food with chef friends for 1,000 people

each day.

"It was a guerilla-style relief effort," he recalled. During that period he met Jon Rose, a pro surfer and the founder of Waves for Water, which works to bring clean drinking water to people around the world.

"I knew at that point I wanted to get involved," Mr. Chernow said. After learning that 30% of the hospitality industry is staffed by people from countries that have limited access to clean water, he

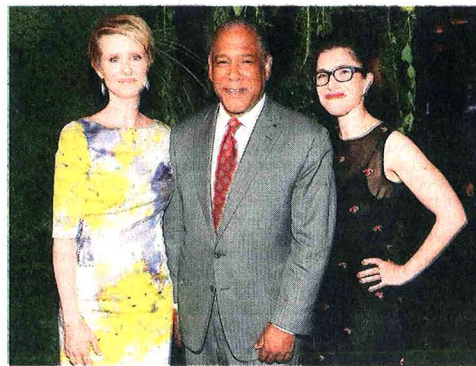
emailed his team asking if anyone came from a place that was particularly affected.

Colombia came up, which is where the money raised by Tuesday's dinner will go. Mr. Chernow plans to take a trip there with Waves for Water to see it put to use.

On-theme, he invited six chefs to make a Colombia-inspired meal. He sent out a list of 10 suggested Colombian dishes and asked them to take their pick.



Catie Marron and Joshua David, above left, at the Friends of the High Line annual spring benefit, left. Above right, Marika and Neil Bender. Below, Cynthia Nixon, Mitchell Silver and Jenny Gersten.



Dale Talde made escabeche de pescado, or fried fish with a spicy pickled onion sauce. Mr. Holzman made scrambled eggs with shrimp. Gavin Kaysen made empanadas. Jamie Bissonnette made lechona, a whole roast pig stuffed with rice, peas and onions. Nick Anderer made sancocho, a meaty soup with tomato, corn and cilantro.

The intimate space allowed all the chefs to describe what they'd cooked, "and they didn't

need a microphone," said Mr. Chernow. "It was perfect."

For an afterparty, the chefs made variations on the restaurant's eponymous delicacy, including rabbit meatballs, chocolate meatballs and swordfish meatballs, the last of which Mr. Chernow hopes to place in regular rotation.

"They killed it," he said.

Interestingly enough, Mr. Chernow added, "nobody made a Colombian-inspired meatball."