

Amigos for Kids gala planners upstage themselves

No one thought it was possible but the Amigos for Kids gala committee topped itself with this year's ING Miami Celebrity Domino Night, the much-anticipated bash at Parrot Jungle Island on June 18. Almost 2,000 supporters attended the gala benefiting Amigos For Kids, a non-profit organization committed to meeting the diverse needs of South Florida's abused, abandoned and less fortunate children.

The gala exceeded expectations in the fun department but the charity also surpassed its fundraising goal this year. As guests arrived on the upper floor for Domino Night, they were greeted by Latin Fever, a guitar-playing quartet performing an energetic fusion of authentic Cuban favorites, flamenco and current sounds. They played all night long in the auction area and more than one couple spontaneously danced off the elevator. Inside the main ballroom, Miami's power brokers and socialites played dominoes at reserved tables with local celebrities including television personalities, politicians, VIPs and community leaders. Those who chose not to play danced all night long. The ambience was like a class reunion with everyone mingling in the cocktail party set-up, greeting old friends they had not seen in years. In addition to the silent auction, the event also featured local entertainment by Hansel y La Orquesta Calle 8, Salsa Kings dance group and Hot Jamz.

Dinner was served downstairs this year with food stations placed around the perimeter of the courtyard. Some of Miami's favorite chefs, caterers and restaurants were there: Le Basque Catering, MediterAsia, Chispa, El Sembrador, Café 1909, Giardino Gourmet Salads, International Restaurant, The Pasta Factory, The District Restaurant, Mariposa Restaurant, Ben and Jerry's, and Versailles. In the center of the courtyard, Afro-Cuban funk group PALO! performed and despite the heat -- even more dancing. In keeping with the "Miami Chic" attire, most men wore guayaberas -- some donning Panama hats -- and women wore sexy colorful dresses.

Jorge Plasencia, co-founder of the charity, accepted the first Dewar's 12 Amigos of Distinction Award on behalf of the board of directors for its outstanding commitment to the community. The charity co-hosted the event with ING, a financial services company. The gala was presented by TotalBank. Other corporate sponsors included BAP Development, Baptist Health South Florida, Barry University, Dewar's12, MetroPCS, NEO-Vertika, Nextel, Terra Group, The Vue at Brickell, Venezuela Sin Limites and Versailles. A traditional touch: The party after the party. VIP cards were handed out to guests for free café con leche at, where else, Versailles Restaurant, the Calle Ocho landmark valid through 4:00 am. That capped off a wonderful evening.

Among those attending were honorary chairs, Versailles owners **Lourdes** and **Felipe Valls** and **Adrienne Arsht**, chairwoman, TotalBank; interior designer **Gus del Pozo**; **Albert Oses**; **Alan Randolph**, Mellon Bank, and **Martin Krediet**, The Raleigh Hotel; **Padre Alberto**; singer **Jorge Moreno**; **Justo Luis** and **Silvia Pozo**; **Alex Villoch** and attorney **Gary Saslaw**. The host committee included **Aleco** and **Carolina Azqueta**, **Lourdes** and **Marcelo Fanjul**, **Marlon Hill**, **Sandra Gonzalez-Levy**. Event chairs were **Nibaldo Capote**, **Pablo** and **Carolina Cejas**, **Carlos Navarro**, **Antonio** and **Vivian Roca**, **Mike** and **Francine Tomás**.