

THE SCENE & THE SEEN

By Elsa Brenner



FOOD BANK FOR WESTCHESTER Take Heart Against Hunger

Take Heart Against Hunger” was the theme of this February’s Food Bank for Westchester’s sumptuous gala at the Tappan Hill Mansion in Tarrytown, featuring a five-course dinner with wines to match. The groaning tables at the affair and the opulence that is so often associated with Westchester offered a sharp contrast to poverty in the county that sometimes goes unseen. But as Food Bank directors like **Richard Rakow** (the evening’s master of ceremonies) reminded us—and we should never forget—26,000-plus area households depend on the Food Bank, a critical lifeline for some 200 hunger relief agencies. As the economic downturn grinds on, the need only grows.

At the elegant mansion on the Hudson River (briefly owned during the 19th century by humorist and author Mark Twain), a 21st century gustatory delight took place. It was somewhat surprising, however, that the menu included a foie gras brulee as an appetizer and osso buco for the main course, both of which are considered politically incorrect by some animal lovers. (Thankfully, the trio of mini sundaes for dessert offended no one, involving neither force-fed birds nor young calves.)

Alison Awerbuch, executive vice president and partner for Abigail Kirsch, the renowned caterer, regaled the sold-out house with details of the menu—many items of which, she said, were known aphrodisiacs. Considering the winter weather, body heat would have been a sufficient aphrodisiac for some of the attendees, but just the same, it was a nice touch in keeping with the Valentine’s Day theme.

Tom Lalla, a senior vice president and general counsel for spirits and wine importer Pernod Ricard USA, represented one of the evening’s sponsors and attended wearing all Brooks Brothers, including his suit, tie, shirt—“the works,” he said. The Chappaqua resident came by himself and left in a limo parked outside and waiting for him in the dark cold of an otherwise dreary winter night.

Also among the guests was the dapper **Mark Iannucci**, a fire captain in Yonkers and the apple of wife **Jean Connolly’s** eye. A senior financial director for Bank of New York Mellon Wealth Management, she wore diamonds—a pave puffed heart by Wilson & Son Jewelers in Mount Kisco and Scarsdale. Also happy together: **John Rubino** of Yorktown, a global sales exec for FedEx, was there with wife, **Cindy**, his “love of 22 years,” he told us. The event coincided with their wedding anniversary, and they both still glow like newlyweds. “It doesn’t get better than this,” he said. Now, how’s that for romantic?

1. Westchester County Board of Legislators Chairman Ken Jenkins with Kathy and Michael Kurtz. 2. Volunteers from Food Bank for Westchester’s gala dinner: top: Tracey Harvey, Pat Reino, and Linda Piermarini; bottom: Susan Mayer and Lou Zimet. 3. Alison Awerbuch. 4. Richard Rakow. 5. Mark Iannucci, Linda Rey, Jean Marie Connolly, Richard Rakow, and Charles Day.

Photos by Cathy Pinsky