

Windows on the world



Left: The LGBT Asylum Project founder Okan Sengun crowns Mr. Saudi Arabia (Mahdi Alshuyukh) as Mr. International Freedom. **Right:** Mr. International Freedom contestants (L to R): Mr. Saudi Arabia (Mahdi Alshuyukh), Mr. Brazil (Icarus Ferreira), Mr. USA (Trebion Prince), Mr. Philippines (Jethro Patalinghug), Mr. Colombia (Juliano Wade), and Mr. France (Nicolas Bettinger).

by Donna Sachet

The first ever Mr. International Freedom Contest, organized by Adam Sandel to support the new LGBT Asylum Project, drew six popular contestants at Beaux last Tuesday night. We commenced the proceedings as Nicolas Bettinger, Icarus Ferreira, Jethro Patalinghug, TreBion Prince, Juliano Wade, and Mahdi Aishuyukh competed in jeans and tank top and later Speedos, answering topical and funny questions in front of hundreds of admirers.

Founders Okan Sengun and Brooke Ashley were on hand to explain the importance of this new organization, especially in today's political climate for the LGBT community. After great consideration, including hundreds of dollars gathered from the audience by the contestants, the winner emerged: Mr. Saudi Arabia, Mahdi Aishuyukh, who immediately donned the laurel leaves, sash, and wide smile of Mr. International Freedom. Adam promises that this will become an annual event, so watch out for the next competition. We also expect to see great work from the LGBT Asylum Project, protecting lives and families from persecution, separation, and discrimination.

Wednesday night, Positive Resource Center hosted their annual gala *Windows of Opportunity* at City Club, a gorgeous Art Deco

ballroom with soaring ceilings and great views. Guests enjoyed light food and cocktails before a brief address by Executive Director Brett Andrews, followed by the presentation of Community Legacy Awards to AIDS Emergency Fund and Baker Place, the agencies with whom PRC is merging.



Attendees included Reigning Empress Emma Peel, Gary Virginia, James Holloway, Deana Dawn, China Silk, Lu Conrad, Bill Hirsch, Skye Paterson, Ken Henderson, Joanie Juster, Mike Smith, and many Board members and staff from all three groups. DJ Lamont kept the mood upbeat and the silent auction offered a variety of temptations.

This was truly a historic evening, particularly poignant to so many in the room who have worked tirelessly for all three agencies and the many clients they have assisted. We have all recognized the growing need for consolidation and mergers of our many non-profit groups, but this represents one of the largest and most significant. Having personally raised money and otherwise supported both AIDS Emergency Fund and Positive Resource Center for over 20 years, we will keep a careful eye on this merger with great expectations of increased and improved client services and continued volunteer opportunities and recognition.

The following night was Shanti's *Compassion is Universal*, chaired by the indefatigable and always lovely Bahya Oumlil-Murad, at the elegant Palace Hotel. On the steady arm of Richard Sablatura, we were greeted for cocktails by Founder Charles Garfield, Executive Director Kaushik Roy, Doug Waggener, John Rosin, Kevin Shanahan & Michael Montoya, John Lipp & Peter Lunny, and many others.

After brisk bidding on an extensive silent auction, we were led by colorfully dressed samba dancers into the sprawling ballroom, where we sat with Nancy Pelosi Lifetime



Above: Jonathan Vernick (Executive Director, Baker Places) and Brett Andrews (CEO, Positive Resource Center) at the PRC gala. **Below:** Brett Andrews (CEO, Positive Resource Center), Donna Sachet, Joanie Juster (AIDS Emergency Volunteer), and Scott Williams (Former Board Chair of AIDS Emergency Fund) at the PRC gala.

Achievement Award honoree Sandra Hernandez, presenter State Senator Mark Leno, Bob Dockendorff, and Steven Miller & Scott Owens.

The James Hormel Community Spirit Award was presented by Christine Pelosi to Chief of Staff for House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi, Dan Bernal. Both honorees gave heart-felt speeches to warm audience applause and standing ovations.

Also a big part of the evening's program was a fast-paced auction led by Lenny Broberg, gathering significant funds for Shanti. Immediately after, we had a chance to hob-nob briefly with Tom Horn, Mark Calvano, Joel Goodrich, Susan Magley, Gus Murad, and others.

We were so pleased to see that Hastings College was honoring Mark Leno last Friday that we had to attend the ceremony at the Tenderloin Museum. We joined long-time friend Michael Loftis and were amazed at this beautiful facility, showcasing the rich history of this San Francisco neighborhood. The corner entrance leads through a warm reception area into a spacious room with individual niches with historical items and descriptions from music and theatre to the sex industry and the LGBT Community.

The brief program was led by David Steward and Mary Noel Pepps, followed by personal tributes to Mark by Leo Martinez, Randy Shaw, Terrance Alan, Joe Caruba, and Theresa Sparks. We ended with a festive toast to this man who has so wonderfully changed the City, the State, and the nation. Mark then spoke with his usual humility and passion about his love of his work and the people he has represented. Whatever he future holds for this extraordinary civil servant, we are with him!

October continues to keep us on our toes with multiple events worthy of your attention and attendance. Congressman Barney Frank is in town tonight, Thursday, October 20, and we'll be there to hear him discuss LGBTQ candidates for public office and why that is important.

On Friday, October 21, Breast Cancer Emergency Fund hosts *This Old Bag* at Bentley Reserve, where handbags donated by celebrities, local luminaries, and boutiques will be auctioned off to benefit the cause. Also that night, a new exhibit opens at the GLBT Museum on 18th Street called *After Hours: Black Cat Makeover*, celebrating Jose Sarria and the place where he became known as a performer and pioneer in the LGBT movement.

Saturday, October 22, we look forward the Human Rights Campaign Gala at the Westin St. Francis where local favorite Lea DeLaria will receive the HRC Visibility Award and *Bay Times'* Betty Sullivan & Jennifer Viegas receive the Charles Holmes Service Award.

There will be events all week celebrating The Edge's 25th Anniversary, culminating in Sunday, October 23's bash from 6-8PM, hosted by Brian Kent and this columnist, a frequent visitor to the friendliest bar in the Castro. Expect performances by Brian, Sue Casa, Sugah Betes, and stars from the long-running Monster Show, not to mention

shared stories of 25 years of fun.

We end with our own tribute to our friend Wayne Friday, who died last week and will receive an appropriate celebration of life event in the next few weeks. His long tenure as this paper's political columnist brought him into the home of nearly every LGBT person in San Francisco and made many other pay attention to his astute observations and sly innuendo. We knew him as a hard-drinking, but deep-hearted and generous man who loved to be on the inside of any story and often was.

When we once found ourselves in Pacific Heights with Anita Martini at a fundraiser for Susan Leal without a ride back home, Police Commissioner Wayne Friday gleefully volunteered not only to drive us, but to put his red light atop the car all the way back to the Castro. We both cherished the Police Commission business card he gave us that night, hoping that it might one day prevent an unfortunate episode with city officials. Once again, San Francisco dims with the loss of the light of this man who loved his city, his community, and his many friends. ▼



Left: Chief of Staff for House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi, Dan Bernal (left, with his partner Dan Burns) at Shanti's gala at the Palace Hotel. **Right:** Lea DeLaria will receive the HRC Visibility Award at HRC's gala on Oct. 22.



Steven Underhill 415 370 7152
PHOTOGRAPHY
 WEDDINGS, HEADSHOTS, PORTRAITS
stevenunderhill.com • stevenunderhillphotos@gmail.com