

Coral Gables news

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Preservation group celebrates at equestrian-themed event

BY ROBERT HAMILTON

The Historic Preservation Association of Coral Gables (HPACG) along with Professional Bank, a tenant at 396 Alhambra, hosted an elegant, vintage equestrian-themed fundraiser on the fourth floor rooftop terrace overlooking historic Alhambra Circle.

Guests enjoyed sitting al fresco on a beautiful South Florida winter evening in honor of people, places, and things.

One special honor was bestowed on the late Raul G. Valdes-Fauli, who had served as president/CEO of Professional Bank and was a friend of HPACG and its board of directors. The board took the opportunity to present a gift of appreciation to Professional Bank in his memory. To accept the award was Abel Iglesias, current bank CEO, Raul Valdes-Fauli (Raul's father and former Coral Gables mayor), and uncle Jose Valdes-Fauli (a member of HPACG).

A highlight of the evening was the milestone marking what would have been Raul's 49th birthday. The Valdes-Fauli family also spoke about their long history of supporting historic preservation and their creation of the Coral Gables Archives Collection at the Historical Resources and Cultural Arts Department.

More recognition followed with the presentation of the annual "Friend of HPACG" awards established in 2014. Members Pat Button and Diego Quiros were recognized for their consistency in support of the Historic Preservation Association of Coral Gables through giving of their time, talent, and treasure. Past recipients include Myrna Santos Mayor, Bruce Fitzgerald, and Claudia Bardasano. Recipients are selected by the board of directors.

While sipping on champagne, enjoying gourmet delicacies by Chocolate Fashion, and listening to Cuban-trained, international accordion artist Maricarmen Vazquez, guests also learned about a long lost history and plans by HPACG to honor the places and things that played a significant role in the early life of Coral Gables and its citizens with an official



Historic Preservation Association of Coral Gables Board of Directors presents appreciation award to Professional Bank in memory of the late Raul G. Valdes-Fauli.

historical marker in early 2017.

Many did not know that one of the original dimensions of Coral Gables founder George Merrick's dream was the importance of horses in the social and sporting life of his new city.

"Silver," famous as the mount of the Lone Ranger in the movies, was a celebrity in the early years. Silver, a pure white Arabian stallion was much in demand for local events and parades in Coral Gables.

The median of Alhambra Circle, conveniently right below the rooftop terrace, was laid out originally with a bridle path. The 35-mile horse trails ran along Alhambra and Country Club Prado, around the Granada Golf Course, the Biltmore course, the campus of the University of Miami, and beside the waterways.

Historical images borrowed from the City of Coral Gables were displayed throughout to help guests understand the historical perspective of the place.

Overall, the event's success was due in part to the support of corporate sponsors: Professional Bank and Bennett & Bennett Law, and individual sponsors: Karelia Martinez Carbonell, David Mitchell, Jane Maranos, Mary Anne Danguillecourt, and Dolly MacIntyre. Special recognition also went out to volunteers Sherry Preston, Cindy French-Shaked, and Joan Thompson.

The annual fundraiser included a small silent auction with original artworks by artists Ninoska Perez-Castellon and Emilio Sauma; vintage porcelain; and equestrian-themed items. Proceeds benefit historic resources and their preservation in Coral Gables and beyond.

Historic Preservation Association of Coral Gables (HPACG) is a 501(c)3 nonprofit with a mission to promote the understanding and importance of historic resources and their preservation. For additional information or to become a member, visit <www.historiccoralgables.org>.