

Publication: Northwest Arkansas Democrat-Gazette

Date: July 20, 2008

Section: Northwest Profile

Page Number: 47

Power loss doesn't drain Harbor of faithful friends

— Cyd King

FAYETTEVILLE — Threatening weather and a subsequent 45-minute power failure at the Fayetteville Town Center threatened to dim the spirits of 400 or so people attending the Ryan Gibson Foundation's seventh annual One Particular Harbor. But the foundation's faithful grabbed more drinks, hunkered down and rode out the storm.

The \$75-per-person ticket sales, sponsorships and proceeds from silent and live auctions grossed about \$92,000.

The foundation is named for Carol Lynn and Don Gibson's oldest son, who died in January 2001 after a six-year struggle with leukemia. Since then, the family and several of "Gibbie's" closest college buddies from Dallas have been conducting fundraisers all over the country, some of them — "Fins," "Cheeseburgers in Paradise" and the flagship benefit, "One Particular Harbor" — named for songs by a Gibson family favorite, Jimmy Buffett.

Because of the slowing economy, organizers worried that attendance would fall at the shallow end, but they were pleasantly surprised by a steady stream of support. Since its inception, the foundation has raised nearly \$500,000 for research grants focused on finding a cure for leukemia.

Past recipients of monetary "Gibbie Awards" include Dr. Robert Collins, Ryan Gibson's former boss at the University of Texas Medical Center at Dallas, and Dr. Peter Emanuel, executive director of the Winthrop P. Rockefeller Cancer Institute in Little Rock. A \$50,000 stipend for Emanuel last year will put Ryan Gibson's name on a 20,000-square-foot leukemia research lab included in an expansion of the cancer institute. In screening for prospective beneficiaries, daddy Don says he looks for the words "cure the disease."

New to the party this year were "Harbor Captains," underwriting sponsors who gave \$3,000 to offset expenses: Henry Eye Clinic, Mark Henry and Catering Unlimited, The Pinnacle Group including Johnelle Hunt and Tim Graham, Legacy National Bank, Shirley and Pete Esch and the L.H. Schmieding Foundation. Fare by Catering Unlimited included tropical fajitas; pulled pork with Caribbean jerk seasoning; meatballs in mushroom sauce; a fruits display; cheese and relish trays; and spinach and artichoke dip, queso, creamed crab dip and mango salsa served with tortilla chips and toast points.

When the lights went out, guests resorted to using their cell phones and cigarette lighters to peruse more than 150 silent auction items, such as jewelry, artwork, private dinners and gift certificates. The rest chatted around guest tables lighted with votive candles or gathered at the room's south-facing windows to watch the approaching storm.

It made an even longer evening for party emcee Derek Gibson, the younger of the two Gibson boys, whose wife, Jennifer, gave birth to the couple's second child, a girl named Brookelyn Elizabeth, just two days before. Jennifer, Dr. Mary Frances Daut and Carolyn Lynn Gibson were recognized as the muscle behind the silent auction.

The live auction — conducted after the lights came back on — included an autographed Darren McFadden jersey; a Razorbacks football helmet to be autographed for the high bidder by Coach Bobby Petrino; a trip for four for a week in Cabo San Lucas, Mexico; and a trip to Costa Rica. Proceeds from the live auction topped \$11,000. Entertainment by the band Big 'Uns followed.



Don Gibson tries to drive up live auction bids on a trip to Costa Rica



Gene Staggs (center) hands Cathy and Terry Suen an autographed Darren McFadden jersey that the Suens bought for \$775.



Cathy Suen, Terrye Brosh, Dr. Peter and Carla Emanuel of Little Rock, Dr. Tony Hui and Denise Garner



Rick Sharpe, Pat Walker and Helen Schmieding PHOTOS BY CYD KING



Joe Moore and Don Struebing (seated) with Diane and Thomas Bolinger and Theresa and Jan Struebing



Tim and Beverly Graham