

VIP dinner may relieve crunch at gay charities

▶ OUTLOOKS, FROM 1E

recognition dinner for the Dade Human Rights Foundation, South Florida's leading gay philanthropic organization. The event is sold out.

"You can't get a ticket," said Miami-Dade attorney Ira Leesfield, a dinner co-sponsor who enticed the evening's star attraction: Democratic U.S. Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton of New York.

"Hillary is just the icing on the cake. Huge icing," Leesfield said.

Also on the program: 2002 Latin Grammy winner Jorge Moreno, the dinner's featured performer; flutist Nestor Torres, who opens the evening; and former E! television anchor Steve Kmetko, who emcees.

This year's dinner — the foundation's sixth — will have about 500 more attendees than in 2001.

Each paid at least \$175 for a ticket.

SPECIAL AWARD

Leesfield attributes much of the attendance growth to Lee Brian Schragger, national director of media and special events for South Florida-based Southern Wine & Spirits, who tonight will receive the foundation's humanitarian award, which is sponsored by The Herald.

"With Lee being honored, [the dinner reached] a new plateau," said Leesfield, who with his wife, Cynthia, has been active in foundation fundraising for several years.

Leesfield said Schragger, who is gay, persuaded him and many of South Florida's other top nongay fundraisers to raise their "level of involvement" with the foundation.

"Because of Lee, you're seeing a general outreach, and it's becoming more mainstream," said dinner co-sponsor Ken Gorin, president and co-owner of The Collection in Coral Gables.

"When Lee asks, I usually do," said Gorin, whose car dealership also sponsors South Florida's Make-A-Wish Foun-

datation for sick youngsters.

Schragger is spearheading Make-A-Wish's annual fundraising dinner Oct. 25 at the Hotel Inter-Continental, where he reigned for years as one of South Florida's best-known caterers.

In addition, Schragger has raised money for gay nonprofits throughout South Florida. This year, his employer gave \$40,000 to the Miami Gay & Lesbian Film Festival, as well as donations to Food for Life Network, Care Resource's annual White Party at Viscaya and the Episcopal AIDS Ministry.

Tonight's dinner is co-chaired by three longtime Schragger pals: Miami lawyer Samuel Blum, Sandra Muss (wife of Fontainebleau Hilton owner Stephen Muss and ex-wife of Schragger's former boss at CenTrust Bank, David L. Paul) and socialite Lola Jacobson.

AUCTION, TOO

Another friend, Lea Black, will host an auction of expensive cars, cruises and clothing — all donated through Schragger's prodding.

The group has raised more than \$900,000 in cash for gay-oriented nonprofits since it began in 1994. This year's grants included the gay film festival (\$10,000), the Gay & Lesbian Community Center of South Florida (\$5,000) and Pridelines Youth Services (\$10,000).

Dade Human Rights Foundation supporters hope this year to raise the organization's profile in Broward County. Tonight's dinner is at the Westin Diplomat Resort & Spa in Hollywood, where the group will announce that it is adopting a new, regional name.

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RICHARD PATTERSON/FOR THE HERALD

LEE BRIAN SCHRAGER: Liquor exec will get Dade Human Rights Foundation's humanitarian award.

VIP dinner may relieve pinch at gay charities

Most charities today complain they are feeling the pinch in a post-Sept. 11, up-and-down economy.

And South Florida's gay nonprofit groups say they are hurting worse because a million dollars that might have gone to them was raised and spent this summer successfully defending Miami-Dade's gay-rights amendment.



STEVE ROTH AUS

OUTLOOKS

"We really tapped our volunteer and financial resources so much by the end that it

really showed," said Miami Beach lawyer Elizabeth Schwartz. "It's going to be interesting to see how all the organizations come back."

Fundraising has been slow for nonprofits like Project YES, which works to prevent gay teen suicides.

"The market is down, and people have less money to give," Executive Director Martha Fugate said. "Foundation giving has been off 30 to 50 percent this year."

Gay civic leaders hope the recovery begins tonight, as more than 1,300 fundraisers attend this year's annual