


The honor of their presence

 chicagobusiness.com/article/20141018/ISSUE03/310189992/do-gala-chairs-and-host-committee-members-need-to-show-up

Lisa Bertagnoli

October 18,
2014



That's Avy Stein, managing partner at private-equity firm Willis Stein & Partners in Chicago; dinner chair Renee Crown; and event chair William Marovitz, a former state senator who sits on several nonprofit boards. All three are listed on the gala invitation, and all three are expected to attend.

Unusual? Perhaps. Here's a guide to who might, or might not, show up at the next big-name fundraiser.

Honorees: Names matter; attendance is a really good idea. When they don't show or send an emissary to receive the award, "it's annoying and unacceptable," says philanthropist Alexandra Nichols, a trustee at Harris Theater and several other area nonprofits. Gala guests "come with a very strong interest in seeing the awardee receive the award."

That said, Ms. Nichols understands when major CEOs—the ones running billion-dollar investment banks or drugstore chains—don't show. "They really aren't in control" of their schedules, she says.

Honorary chairs: Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel and Illinois Gov. Pat Quinn appear frequently in this slot; both are known for showing up, at least for 10 minutes during cocktail hour.

Gala chairs: Names draw guests. Attendance should be mandatory.

Anne Pramaggiore, president and CEO of Commonwealth Edison Co. in Chicago, has agreed to chair or co-chair six galas this year, including the **Black Ensemble Theater's Oct. 17 gala**. Attending "is sort of job one—you need to show up," says Ms. Pramaggiore, who guesses she's missed only one event in the past decade. She also works with her staff to make sure the right guests are invited to sit at ComEd's tables at the party. "I've made a commitment to the organization to make (the event) successful for them."

Host committees: Names matter, and the more, the merrier. Attendance is optional.

On Sept. 21, Primo Center for Women and Children, a West Side social services agency, held its fourth annual Primo Classico fundraiser at Lake Forest SportsCars. The program listed about 90 names, among them Quintin Primo, co-founder, chairman and CEO of Chicago-based Capri Capital Partners LLC, and his wife, Diane; Chicago Bears wide receiver Brandon Marshall and his wife, Michi; and 2nd Ward Ald. Bob Fioretti, who also is running for mayor.

About two-thirds of those listed attended the event, which had competition: Common Ground Foundation's Aahh Fest, held at Union Park in Chicago. "Some people made a choice," says Shelley Cooper, chief development officer at Primo Center. "James Reynolds (founder, chairman and CEO of Loop Capital Holdings LLC in Chicago) did both."

Host committee members who didn't attend, including architect Lucien Lagrange, sent healthy donations. That's fine with Ms. Cooper: The event, which grossed \$405,000, exceeded its fundraising goal, "and that's the point," she says.

Contact: [\[email protected\]](#)