

New York City Mission Society hosts 'Champions for Children Gala'

By Audrey J. Bernard
Society Editor

The beautiful Grand Ballroom of the Mandarin Oriental New York in Columbus Circle, NYC was a cornucopia of sophistication on Tuesday, April 24, 2018 at the elegant New York City Mission Society's (NYCMS) Annual Champions for Children Gala to support educational programs and supportive services that help youth and families in NYC's underserved communities break the cycle of poverty and achieve success. The Red Maple Leaf — under the creative eye of Sandra Parks — set the tone for the exemplary evening with luxurious floral arrangements. The ballroom was decked out with 6 ft tall soft pink Cherry Blossoms branches adorned with White Hydrangeas and White Phalaenopsis Orchids, which complimented the White Phalaenopsis Multibloom Cascading Orchids in multi-level smoked glass containers and floating white candles atop each table. Over 300 invitees donned their best black tie and enjoyed the sweet smell of success as the event exceeded all inspirational and financial expectations.

The gala kicked off with convivial cocktails at 6:30 PM followed by a delicious dinner, dessert and a pristine program, which included entertainment by Alex Donner & His Orchestra and a pulsating performance by students from NYCMS's free afterschool GRIOT music program. The highlight of the evening was the presentation of the esteemed Champion Awards. The *Lifetime Achievement Award* to Cathy Hughes, Founder and Chairperson, Urban One, Inc. (which includes TV One and Radio One) for her trailblazing achievements in media presented by last year's winner, Don Peebles; the *Dina Merrill Hartley Public Service Award*, named after the longtime thespian and philanthropist whose family has supported the NYCMS for generations, to Mannie Jackson, 2017 Naismith Basketball Hall of Famer and President, Mannie Jackson for the Humanities Foundation; the *Corporate Visionary Award* to BNY Mellon and accepted by Patrick Vatel, Managing Director of BNY Mellon; and the *Corporate Champion Award* to International Flavors & Fragrances and accepted by Susana Suarez-Gonzalez, Executive Vice President and Chief Human Resources Officer of International Flavors & Fragrances. A Special Recognition Award was presented to LTC Francis W. Kairson Jr., Ret., Director



MC Bill Ritter (AW)

Emeritus, NYCMS.

"We are celebrating those who have been committed to empowering others to achieve their dreams," said Mission Society President Elsie McCabe Thompson. They embody a profound commitment to make the world a better place, one full of promise and of opportunity, particularly for our younger generations." Reflecting on NYMS's storied history, Thompson spoke about the organization's increased focus on education through initiatives



Mannie Jackson, Elsie McCabe Thompson, LTC Francis W. Kairson Jr. (Ret), Cathy Hughes (SG)

she said. "For 206 years we have opened doors, we have changed lives, and we have brought out the best in those we served — individuals who had ability, but often came to us without the skills or self-confidence to realize their full potential."

WABC News Anchor Bill Ritter, a longtime supporter of NYCMS, served as Master of Ceremonies and C. Hugh Hildesley, Vice Chairman of

firoff, who dazzled the audience wearing a gown from the B. Michael Couture Collection.

This year's Gala Leadership included: *Champions International Flavors & Fragrances*, Katrina & Don Peebles, Leah & Stanley H. Rumbough, and Jean & Martin Shafiroff; *Visionaries BNY Mellon*, Fiona & Stanley Druckenmiller and Yemi & Patrick Vatel; *Advocates Kramer Levin Naftalis & Frankel*



Stan Rumbough, Jean Shafiroff, Elsie McCabe Thompson, Katrina Peebles (SG)

LLP, MacFarlane Partners, Stifel Financial Corporation and The Gray Foundation; along with an illustrious list of patrons, friends and young professionals society. To commemorate the lovely evening each guest received a gift bag sponsored by Molton Brown. (Photos by Annie Watt and Sylvain Gaboury/Patrick McMullan via Getty Images)



Patrick Vatel, Derek Steinhiser (AW)



Mannie Jackson, Elsie McCabe Thompson (AW)



Cathy Hughes, Don Peebles (AW)



Elsie McCabe Thompson, Susana Suarez-Gonzalez (AW)



Designer B. Michael, Valerie Simpson (SG)



Cathy Hughes, Elsie McCabe Thompson (AW)



Jean & Martin Shafiroff (SG)



Flo Anthony, Karina Tatarski (AJB)



Elsie McCabe Thompson, Tony Marx (SG)



Victor De Souza, Tanja Dreiding Wallace (AW)



Michele Herbert, Lucia Hwong Gordon (AW)



Hugh Hildesley (AW)

such as Learning to Work, the free afterschool music program GRIOT, and the summer and afterschool program, Power Academy, and its plans to provide even more opportunities in the future. "From our earliest days, we have provided access to services. We have created programs that have benefited people who needed a chance, but who didn't always see a light at the end of their tunnel,"

Sotheby's, served as auctioneer during the high bidding war for fabulous items that raised additional funds to benefit the Mission. In addition to Thompson, other participants in the distinguished program included remarks by Derek E. Steinhiser, Chair, Board of Directors, NYCMS; John Reynolds, Learning to Work Program Manager, NYCMS; and Event Co-Chairs Katrina Peebles and Jean Sha-

About the New York City Mission Society

The New York City Mission Society has been on the frontlines of the war on poverty for more than 200 years. Today, our progressive portfolio of educational, workforce development, cultural enrichment, and community-building programs, make a positive, long-term impact on the City's most underserved communities by promoting academic achievement, and providing career opportunities and cultural enrichment. Each year, we serve more than 10,000 children and families throughout New York City with our programs, supportive services, and community events. <http://www.nycmissionsociety.org>.