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A family foundation organizes and pays for a Jewish charity's fundraiser

by Nathan Burnstein

That old adage about needing to spend money to make money? It's true, even for charities. At a recent upscale fundraiser for the Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty, one of New York's biggest social-service organizations, the council pocketed all the revenue without sacrificing a dime of its own budget. So party-goers sipped wine and noshed on hors d'oeuvres without ambivalence, knowing that 100 percent of the evening's proceeds would go to the cause they had come to support.

The "Happy Hour" was the third annual fundraiser hosted by the Tycher Family Foundation, which in earlier years underwrote similar affairs on behalf of the Valerie Fund and Fisher House, both of which address medical care.

Promoted as "A Truly Happy Hour" the mid-evening affair cost \$85 per ticket and featured many of the same attractions of a more typical fundraiser: open bar, waiters passing trays of light snacks, and stylish guests schmoozing in sleek skirts and suits. With recent hits from Mariah Carey and Beyonce playing in the background, party-goers circulated among the cheese-and-cracker stations and checked out offerings at the silent auction where items ranged from a haircut from a top stylist to a two-night vacation package in Nantucket.

In staging these affairs, the Tycher Family Foundation operates according to the motto “We’ll Give the Party, You’ll Give the Hope”. The hope in this case came courtesy of Met Council, whose programs range from kosher food pantries and job placement to housing for the homeless. “The Met Council fell right into what was on everyone’s mind this year- poverty, homelessness and people in crisis,” says Tycher, noting that her family selected the organization in part because of its outreach beyond the Jewish community.

For the Tycher Family, helping the recipient organization attract future contributions was a key part of the evening. “We feel that in addition to the money we raise, we make a bigger difference because we introduce the charity to a whole new set of supporters,” Tycher says. “We create an atmosphere for networking. We are trying to make the idea of giving and involvement something that the next generation can really find joy in.”

Strengthening its connection with the younger generation has become a growing priority for Met Council, with the agency establishing an MVP group last year for young professionals who might serve as donors, volunteers and advocates. “This has been very helpful for us in terms of getting new people engaged and connected with giving back,” says Schur Scalettar of Met Council. The cocktail party was a perfect tie-in for what the Met Council is trying to do.”

Drinks in hand, party-goers seemed to respond. Taking the most pleasure from the evening, however, may have been staff from Met Council, who simultaneously kibbutz and perform outreach while another organization picks up the tab. “For us as a charity,” says Schur Scalettar, “this was a win-win.”

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