

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: December 7, 2009

- WHAT:** The 21st Annual Friends of the Fine Arts Center Benefit Event
The Power of Art
- WHEN:** Saturday, January 30th, 6:30pm–11:30pm
- WHERE:** Hotel Northampton, Northampton, MA
Call 1-800-999-UMAS or 545-2511 for tickets or
go online to www.fineartscenter.com/tickets
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(21st Annual Friends of the Fine Arts Center Gala delivers the Power of Art)

The Power of Art is capable of elevating one's spirits, inspiring young artists, invigorating the senses and healing the soul. It's no wonder that "The Power of Art" is the theme for the 21st Annual Friends of the Fine Arts Center's Benefit Gala and Auction at the Hotel Northampton, Saturday, January 30th, 6:30 PM to 11:30 PM. And the Friends are hoping that the community will come out and support the event that will raise needed funds to keep the arts accessible to all - particularly to area schools and underserved communities.

It's a fun evening that is full of great entertainment, food, and auction items donated by local businesses. The gala will be held throughout the entire hotel with entertainment options in four rooms. There is no reserved seating so that patrons can mingle and move easily throughout the venue. New this year is a cigar tent on the patio sponsored by Northampton Rental Center (with complimentary cigars while they last) with cigar aficionado Spencely Rickert. Going into its third gala, the online auction returns this year so that everyone, not just Gala attendees, has the opportunity to bid on the many wonderful items offered through the auction. The online auction begins Thursday, January 1st and ends at 12 noon, Sunday, February 1st. To access the online auction go to www.umassfineartscenter.cmarket.com.

In addition to bidding on items online in advance of the Gala, patrons will be able to bid on selected auction items via laptops stationed throughout the hotel that evening. There will also be several outstanding wine and liquor baskets available to bid on at the Gala event donated by Whole Foods Market, Spirit Haus, Liquors 44 and Four Seasons Wine. The Gala & Auction will benefit arts in education programs providing artist access through workshops and master classes to area schools and communities.

The evening's entertainment offers something for everyone and it all gets started in the ballroom with The Sun Protection Factor Four (SPF-4), a band that continues the tradition pioneered by instru-masters like Dick Dale, The Ventures, Link Wray and other 60's instru-surf bands. SPF-4 includes seasoned players that combine vintage surf-instrumental style with a modern edge/rock performance. The band taps into and delivers the punch and purity of the music, which is easily appreciated by a wide audience. Continuing in the ballroom throughout the rest of the evening is 80's dance band Love Bomb. Robert Holmes, co-founder of "Til' Tuesday" with Aimie Mann", and guitarist/vocalist extraordinaire leads this terrific rock band. "Love Bomb" is 6-piece ensemble featuring guitar, keyboards, bass, drums, sax, and three different vocalists. A fun and incredibly tight band performing a both quirky and friendly combination of rock and R&B hits.

In the Coolidge Café, sultry jazz is offered via the silky tones of Samirah Evans and her Handsome Devils. In New Orleans, a city known worldwide for its music, Evans was one of its most popular jazz & blues vocalists. She first performed at the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival in 1990, and became a regular fixture as either a leader or featured vocalist for 14 consecutive years. She has toured Europe, Asia, and both North and South America as a headliner, and shared stages with a multitude of legendary artists from B.B. King and James Brown, to New Orleans own Queen of Soul, Irma Thomas. Hurricane Katrina caused Samirah and her husband to seek out new living arrangements outside of New Orleans, so they moved to his native town of Brattleboro, Vermont in the fall of 2006. Evans's live performance repertoire runs the gamut from raunchy blues to jazz smooth as silk.

Wiggins Tavern wouldn't be complete without a pub band and the Boston Blackthorn Band fits the bill perfectly. They entertained Celtic music fans throughout New England for more than 15 years. The group is rooted in the Irish ballad tradition of the Clancy Brothers and Tommy Makem with contemporary twists and original arrangements. Featuring lush three-part harmonies and original songs, the band's repertoire also includes classic instrumental jigs and reels played on fiddle, bouzouki, tenor and 5 string banjo, 6 and 12 string guitars and electric bass. Primary vocalist Jim O'Connor hails from western Massachusetts was a member of the Paddy Noonan Band and is a veteran of the New York City Irish music scene.

The auction is busting with over 100 treasures of fine arts, original creations, getaways, catered parties, vacation homes, and more all donated from local businesses and artists. Highlights include Boston Red Sox tickets, accommodations at the Sloane Club London, Hotel Bristol-Vienna Austria, the Provence region of southern France, and the LeMarche region of Italy, and a catered in-home party by LogRolling, the Log Cabin's on-the-road catering service.

Hotel Northampton owner Mansour Ghalibaf has once again inspired his chefs to create an exciting array of menus for the evening with each room offering up a different kind of fare. Cash bars will be available throughout the hotel.

Ticket price for the Gala event is \$100 per person and includes a \$25 tax-deductible contribution. Individual sponsor tickets are available at \$150 and corporate sponsorships are available starting at \$500. For more information, please call the Friends of the Fine Arts Center at 413.545.3671. For tickets to the event, call the box office at 413.545.2511 or 1.800.999.UMAS. For more details about the event go online to fineartscenter.com.

Lead sponsors for the Gala are Northampton Cooperative Bank and the Hotel Northampton. In-kind sponsors include the Daily Hampshire Gazette, WEIB 106.3FM and Tiger Press. Grand Sponsor: United Bank. Sustaining sponsors include Fallon Community Health, Finck & Perras Insurance, Motoko Inoue, PeoplesBank, Prudential Sawicki Real Estate, and Mark & Sarah Tanner.

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