

Feathered Jewels Gala — a soaring success

by Patricia Rambasek, CFRE, Director of Development and Communications

The 2006 Feathered Jewels Gala, held on September 8th, attracted nearly 800 longtime supporters and newcomers to honor the Richard King Mellon Foundation, which received the Phoenix Philanthropy Award. Accepting the award were CEO Prosser Mellon and Senior Vice President Mike Watson, one of the many high points of the evening.

Sky Bank was the presenting sponsor, with regional president Vince Locher and his wife, Lari, as honorary event chairs. Event co-chairs were Jane and George Greer, Darlene and Jack Mascaro, Shelly and Dan Onorato, and Ann and Ron Wertz.

A number of the Aviary's birds brought the beauty of the National Aviary's collection right into the David L. Lawrence Convention Center. The Syrinx Ensemble (named for the voice box of song birds) played music inspired by bird songs

during the cocktail reception. The "World of Birds" free-flight presentation preceded dinner and was a sample of what will be housed in the new theater that is being planned with the help of a remarkable creative team from across the country.

The presentation, under the direction of Steve Martin of Natural Encounters, Inc., was an opportunity to enjoy this unique collection of feathered jewels from Africa to the Amazon. But it was Groucho, the Yellow-naped Amazon, who stole the evening with his singing of several songs including "Alouette," complete with a French accent!

Thanks to the generous support of our sponsors and guests, including Presenting Sponsor Sky Bank, the evening raised over \$425,000 for our conservation and education programs! We are very grateful for the efforts of our Board of Directors, volunteers and National Aviary staff that made the evening such a success.

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Gala guests are awed by Ebony, a West African Crowned Crane.

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