

AUSTIN HAPPENINGS

Glitz and Glamor of "VIVA! Las Vegas!" Returns July 21st

The 14th Annual "VIVA! Las Vegas" event lights up La Zona Rosa on July 21st for an evening of Legas excitement - Austin style. The annual event is a fundraiser for AIDS Services of Austin.

VIVA! features a Vegas style faux casino party, delicious food from some of Austin's top restaurants, exciting auctions featuring one-of-a-kind treasures and Vegas style entertainment. The event moves to La Zona Rosa this year, as its traditional home - the Austin Music Hall - is undergoing renovations.

Organizers say this year's event will be even more spectacular than last year's event, which raised more than \$90,000 for AIDS Services of Austin (ASA) and the Capital Area AIDS Legal Project. The Project provides pro-bono legal services to Central Texans living with



HIV and AIDS.

Silent auction highlights this year include watches from Russell Korman Fine Jewelry, a weekend for two at The Crossings wellness spa, and a Margarita Mayhem party with Paula's Texas Orange liqueur - poolside at the Westlake home of owner Paula Angerstein herself.

Tickets are \$40 in advance. For more information, call (512) 406-6115 or visit www.ASAustin.org.

OutYouth Pays Off Mortgage With Anonymous Donation

OutYouth - the non-profit organization that provides a safe coming out experience for Central Texas youth - recently received a \$105,000 private donation to pay off their drop-in center and offices' mortgage - releasing \$10,200 annually in unrestricted funds. This major donation follows another recent private donation of \$20,000 to fund operations and programming objectives.

"Someone just took a close look at Out Youth, loved what he saw, and showed it in a way the whole world can see," said Board President Matt Smith. "This is not just



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a house. It's not just a monthly mortgage payment. A donation like this is a catalyst, and it's going to help us raise the money we need so OutYouth will always be there for our youth. We couldn't be more excited, inspired, or grateful."

Board members say they will use the recent donations to help cover operating expenses as they continue to build our funding streams. They note, however, that the organization continues to operate at a deficit.

"All of us working hard for Out Youth are dreaming of the day we don't have to worry about money," Smith said. "And this donation takes us a huge step in that direction."

Following a difficult executive transition early last year, OutYouth has rebounded strongly, members say. The organization was forced to close for three months in early 2006, but is now back open and going strong, organizers said.

Board members say they have rebuilt enough confidence locally to draw community support that has been unprecedented in the group's 17 year history.

"We've reaffirmed our mission, vision, and values; recruited powerhouses to our board and program staff;

and rebuilt our programming," Smith said. "OutYouth has successfully leveraged a period of transition and crisis into a turning point in our history."

In May, OutYouth hosted their annual Prom at the Wyndham Hotel, which was attended by more than 150 youth - all decked out in the themed *Rocky Horror*/glam rock attire. Together with PFLAG, the group also won "Best Theme Float" in this year's Austin Pride Parade.



Each year, Out Youth works with an average of 200 young people under the age of 20. Most identify as lesbian, bisexual, or gay - with 19% identifying as straight allies, and a small number identify as

transgender/genderqueer. Youth come from both urban and rural counties around Austin, the group said.

During the coming months, board members say they expect to transition from an unorthodox state of crisis response - in which the board members have carried many operational duties - and to hire an Executive Director. They have prioritized work to increase the group's reach into rural areas and develop programs accessible to Spanish-speaking youth.

For more information, visit www.OutYouth.org.

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