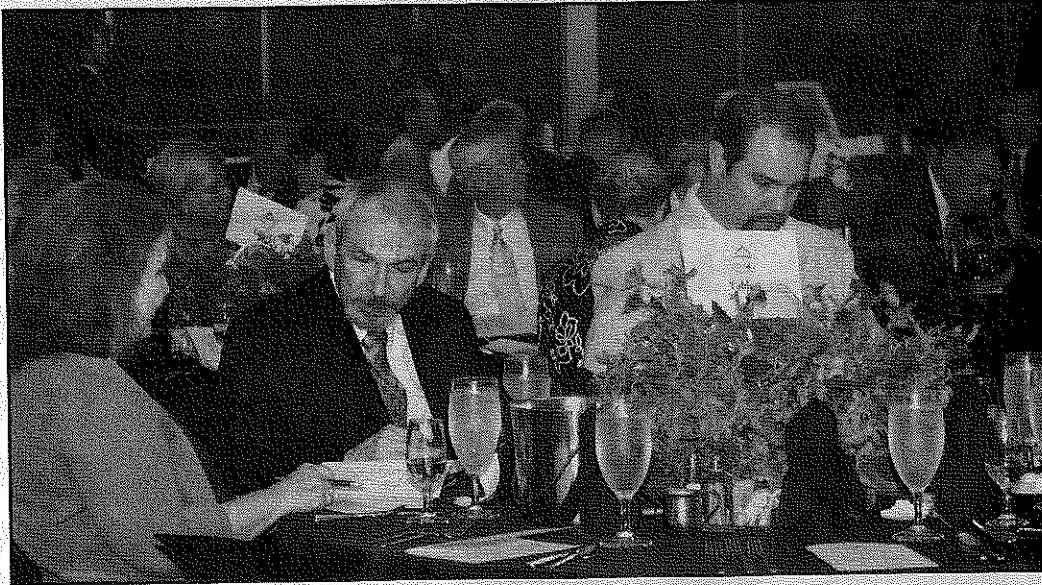


Starkville Bridges summer soiree



Guests at Starkville Bridges Summer Soiree enjoyed a meal and silent auction. **(Submitted photo)**

For Starkville Daily News

Starkville Bridges out of Poverty (Starkville Bridges) held its second-annual fundraiser on May 16 at the Hunter Henry Center. Over 115 guests from the Golden Triangle Area attended the event, aptly named the Starkville Bridges Summer Soiree.

The event featured a five-course meal provided by Bridgett Harding from Harding Catering, a silent auction and music from the Sumic Trio, a local string-instrument group.

All proceeds from the event go toward funding the Starkville Bridges Getting Ahead in a Just Gettin' by World (Getting Ahead) class and various community training events. Already this year, Starkville Bridges has held a community training event, a facilitator training event and begun its Getting Ahead class.

The Getting Ahead class takes place over a sixteen-week period. For one night a week, the course brings together 13 co-investigators, two co-facilitators and two facilitators to openly discuss various topics, such as the causes of poverty, the hidden rules of the middle-class and ways in which to build resources.

Director of Finance for the City of Starkville, Taylor Adams, was the sommelier for the Summer Soiree while Dr. Kathleen Olivieri, Lead IT Consultant at MSU, led the program.

Toward the end of the evening, Meggan Franks, assistant director of Student Leadership and Community Engagement at MSU, and Stedmond Ware, AmeriCorps VISTA and volunteer coordinator for the Maroon Volunteer Center, were recognized for their implementation of the Building Bridges for Kids (BB4K) program.

BB4K partners the children of the Getting

Ahead class co-investigators with Maroon Volunteer Center mentors. The children have recreational time and review a curriculum that is a child-friendly version of the Getting Ahead class topics.

Ware said, "In this year's class, we hope to provide the children with a greater sense of self, help them determine what type of person they want to become in the future, enrich them with knowledge of our society and the causes of poverty and encourage them to pursue secondary and post-secondary education, hence aiding in preventing the cycle of poverty for them and future generations."

Also recognized at the Summer Soiree were the donor of the year, former alderman Sandra Sistrunk, and the volunteer of the year, Olivieri.

Liaison for Starkville Bridges, Kim Harris, said "Mrs. Sistrunk and Dr. Olivieri have been instrumental in the growth of the Starkville Bridges initiative. We are a volunteer-driven non-profit and would be nowhere without the support of our community."

Lynn Phillips-Gaines, CFP, Starkville Bridges president of the board, said the Summer Soiree event was a success and she was thrilled to see the turnout for the event.

Phillips-Gaines said, "I was pleased to see the chef of Restaurant Tyler, Ty Thames, comment about the quality of the food and the wonderful evening on his Facebook page. Everything about the evening was first class, the food, the music and the silent auction items. I cannot begin to express my heartfelt appreciation to Starkville for the support for this poverty initiative."

For more information on ways to volunteer or get involved, call 662-418-3100 or email bridgesoutofpoverty@gmail.com.