



MSI revelers see bright future

Chicago Sun-Times

October 31, 2011

The Museum of Science and Industry put together a futuristic fete for some 800 black-tie-clad guests at the 31st annual Columbian Ball. Business bigwigs and some of the city's most dedicated philanthropists gathered Oct. 22 to clink glasses and dine on high-tech haute cuisine prepared by Chicago's own molecular gastronomy guru Homaro Cantu while celebrating the institution's rotating permanent exhibit: "Fast Forward ... Inventing the Future."

A few key people featured in the exhibit also attended the soiree, including Dickson Despommier, leader of the Vertical Farms Project — a proposal to help feed urban populations by transforming high-rise buildings left empty by the slumping housing market into farms — and Marques McCammon and Paul Wilbur of Aptera Motors, creators of aerodynamic electric cars. Both an Aptera car and an interactive model of a Vertical Farm stand are on display in the exhibit.

Mayor Rahm Emanuel made an appearance at the dinner along with a few other well-known faces, including Nora Daley Conroy, Desiree Rogers, Linda Johnson Rice, Neal Zucker, and Jim and Maxine Farrell. Guests were wowed by the colorful cubist decor and the mountains of dry ice clouds that billowed from the salad course as they dug into their meals.

Tickets to the party (co-chaired by Diana Strassmann, Jeff Smisek and Jackie and Glenn Tilton) began at \$600, and in total, a whopping \$1.9 million was raised for the MSI's Annual Fund.

The ladies of the Field Museum Women's Board welcomed friends and supporters to the institution's largest annual fund-raiser Saturday night, dubbed "Earth: Our Big Beautiful Ball." Partygoers decked out in evening gowns and dapper tuxes gathered to celebrate the opening of "Restoring Earth," an exhibit that shares the ways museum conservationists are working to preserve the planet.

Guests sipped cocktails and supped seared tuna canapes before dinner was served. In keeping with the evening's theme, all ingredients for the meal were sourced from local, sustainable farms. Diners ate under towering leafy "tree" centerpieces while admiring the large, rotating globe positioned in the center of the room.

Notable names spotted among the well-heeled crowd included Abbott CEO Miles D. White and his wife, Kim; Renee and Lester Crown; Cyrus and Mitzi Freidheim; Norm and Virginia Bobins, and society scene staples Sara Albrecht and Liz Stiffel. Cathy Osborn — who attended with her husband, former Northern Trust CEO Bill Osborn — and Caron Lacy acted as gala co-chairs.

After all was tallied, more than \$1.3 million was raised by the event for the museum.