

TOWN&COUNTRY

ArtsConnection Hits A Milestone: The Charity's 35th Celebration

Peonies, applause, and Sarah Jessica Parker: ArtsConnection's 35th's bash has it all.



by CARSON GRIFFITH APR 25, 2014



"Spring has arrived and peonies are in season!" Lisa Plepler, ArtsConnection co-chair, declared with her hands in the air at the 35th anniversary celebration honoring the charity on Thursday, which was founded in 1979 by Linda Janklow. According to the decor at 583 Park Avenue, they certainly were: The room was decorated with the flowers by David Monn in all sizes and shades on the tables and stage (the peonies were from a company in Paris that set up a charity to give underprivileged women in African countries employment; the women are trained to handcraft each individual peony).

"Everyone looks great and beautiful," said CNN anchor Don Lemon, who was emceeding the evening's event. "But you should, you're rich enough." Lemon wasn't the only newsman in the room. "People have been asking me if there is breaking news tonight. The breaking news is we haven't found the plane," he cracked. "Brian Williams is sitting right here in front of me, so I think you'll all be fine."

Along with Williams, Lemon's boss CNN worldwide president Jeff Zucker (accompanied by his wife, Caryn), was also present, as well as Emily and Harold Ford, Jr., Paula and Fareed Zakaria, and a number of other philanthropists and bold-faced names. ArtsConnection, a charity that links learning and the arts, drew an impressive group of supporters, including Sarah Jessica Parker, who Lemon introduced as "an outstanding actress, a great advocate for education and the arts, a true New York icon, and oh yes! A very talented shoe designer."

"This really is a very, very lovely and inspiring evening, and I want to personally thank Lisa Plepler for including me," Parker said. "It's a real treat to be here." Parker, who happily posed with co-chairs, board members and students involved in the program during the cocktail hour leading up to the dinner, added that "arts education, despite the magic it so clearly achieves, is not magic. It's hard work and it's work that demands incredible dedication and wisdom."

The actress made a special presentation to ArtsConnection executive director Steven Tennen, Boardwalk Empire's Jeffrey Wright presented the corporate honoree award to Lisa Garcia Quiroz who accepted on behalf of Time Warner Inc., and Andrea Glimcher presented an award to the artist honoree of the evening, internationally-renowned visual artist Vik Muniz. "Vik once wrote children are reminders of what we once were and what we should be striving to become once again," said Glimcher of the Brazilian-born artist.

To cap off the night, Kathleen Guzman of Heritage Auctions helped raise over \$100,000 to go towards the \$1M total ArtsConnection raised during the evening. "On a town where it doesn't sound like a lot of money, it's a lot of money that means so much to this organization," Guzman urged, as the paddles started to raise.