

Proving that philanthropic endeavors are always in style, the Men and Women of Fashion presented the 2007 Prix d'Elegance Award recipients at a photo shoot held in le Salon of the Windsor Court Hotel. Chosen for their unique personal style, as well as excellence through business, civic and charitable endeavors that specifically better the community, 22 honorees were presented with the distinction this year. Co-chaired by Jacquee Carvin and Teresa Guzzetta, the Men and Women of Fashion will host an awards luncheon and fashion show on April 16. Proceeds from that show will benefit the New Orleans Ballet Association.

"This organization supports fashion in New Orleans but we also emphasize charitable contributions." Mintz says that the Men and Women of Fashion work closely with many of the clothing and jewelry retailers in New Orleans. She feels the industry is important and that recognition from the Men and Women of Fashion helps the city's economy, especially post-Katrina. She adds that New Orleans has its own style. "We may not be New York," she says, "but we're definitely New Orleans." Mintz also says that the Men and Women of Fashion are grateful for the support of area retailers in order to fulfill the organization's philanthropic mission.

# MEN & WOMEN

*High Style Meets High Ideals*

# OF FASHION

PHOTOGRAPHED BY DAVID TOMPKINS

Now in its 36th year, the Men and Women of Fashion is a philanthropic organization that recognizes outstanding members of the community while supporting fashion and retail in New Orleans and creating a forum for further charitable outreach. Each year, members of the organization nominate individuals who have good character, a record of community service and excellent fashion standards. Of the nearly 200 nominees, 10 women and 10 men are chosen. Additionally, the Boards of the Men and Women of Fashion nominate Hall of Fame recipients based on member commitment to the organization and to the city.

"The retail industry is very important to the city," says Women of Fashion President, Christie Mintz.

The Men and Women of Fashion will host a fashion show and awards luncheon on April 16, at the Hilton Riverside Hotel. Models, both professional and culled from the community, will be dressed by Mimi's and Jeff's Haberdashery. In addition, the fashion show will include an auction with items donated by local florists, furniture stores, jewelers and more. "All proceeds from the event are donated to a charitable organization. It's the most fun fashion show you can see," says Mintz.

This is the third year that funds from the Prix d'Elegance award luncheon and fashion show have been given in support of the New Orleans Ballet Association and BRAVO (Ballet Resource And Volunteer Organization). Like the Men and Women

of Fashion, New Orleans Ballet Association's Executive Director, Jenny Hamilton says that the NOBA is an organization deeply committed to the community. "In addition to bringing some of the world's best dance companies to the region, we provide any child with an interest the opportunity to study dance professionally tuition-free" she says. "These programs provide safe havens for our youth and teach them far more than dance." The Co-chairs of the Fashion Show, Carvin and Guzzetta both say the ballet is a perfect choice for the Men and Women of Fashion's charitable contribution. "I think these programs are so important for our youth," Guzzetta says, "especially after Katrina, when so much has been taken away from so many of our children."

Last year, The Men and Women of Fashion raised \$35,000 dollars for the ballet; that money was used to benefit the nationally award-winning education programs and a scholarship fund for talented youth. NOBA offers 2,500 free activities, including free dance classes at 10 sites in three parishes and in-school programming. Hamilton says, "Any child ages 6-18 can learn to dance tuition-free!" Additionally, advanced level students of the NORD/NOBA Center For Dance (a partnership with the New Orleans Recreation Department that was founded in 1992), audition yearly for scholarships to study during the summers at prestigious schools throughout the country, including The Ailey School, Boston Ballet, Houston Ballet, LINES Ballet, etc. Since the NORD/NOBA Center For Dance was founded in 1992, more than 15,000 free dance classes worth over \$1.6 million have been provided to 6,500 children. This program was honored by the White House in 2002, with the prestigious Coming Up Taller Award, one of 10 awards given nationally for excellence in youth programs. Hamilton says that its contributions like those from the Men and Women of Fashion



**Sheila Davlin**  
**Hall of Fame**



**Mike Sport**  
**Hall of Fame**

that help make NOBA's outreach programs possible, "We are grateful to the Men and Women of Fashion for investing in our youth and for believing in the power of the arts to make a difference in the life of a child."

Photographs of the 2007 honorees were taken in Le Salon of the Windsor Court Hotel. Featuring English Manor furnishings that the staff says are meant to be inviting and warm, Prix d'Elegance award winners took pictures while enjoying cocktails and hors d'oeuvres. Cary Alden of the Windsor Court says that Le Salon provides an atmosphere of elegance and refinement. "It's always been a favorite place of the fashionable locals" Alden says. She recommended the space of Le Salon because its refined elegance and warmth matched the recipients of the Prix d'Elegance. She says that she feels the Windsor Court and the Men and Women of Fashion are a perfect match, "The Men and Women of Fashion is a very important group in the city for its charitable efforts. The Windsor Court has been a longtime huge supporter of the arts and the community. We are both big supporters and believers in this community in so many ways."

Indeed, award recipients often echoed their desire to support the arts as their most fashionable characteristic. Says 2007 honoree, Sonda Nagy, "I try to support all the arts in New Orleans because we need it so badly." When asked about style, Ms. Nagy and other 2007 members spoke less about labels and more about being true to oneself. "Don't follow the trends," says Gail Barnes-McConduit. Barnes-McConduit, who teaches an etiquette class to young people, says that true style comes from being comfortable in yourself. But whatever the philosophy, the Men and Women of Fashion remain committed to charity while promoting New Orleans unique fashion footprint. Says Men of Fashion President, R.K. Hoddinott, "It's about philanthropy first." ■