

Prominent Couple Honored with Hospital District Foundation's First Humanitarian Award

By TINA FOSTER
Harris County Hospital District

About 300 friends and supporters of the Harris County Hospital District celebrated a Jubilee of Caring Gala Dinner on Nov. 8. It was a night to reminisce about the Hospital District's creation 35 years ago, applaud accomplishments and set a future course for the Hospital District and its Foundation, which hosted the event.



Richard and Ginni Mithoff were honored as the first recipients of the Ben Taub Humanitarian Award at the Harris County Hospital District's Jubilee of Caring, held Nov. 8. (Photo by Bruce Bennett)

The Foundation's capital campaign, Operation: Fresh Start, got off to a healthy start thanks to prominent Houston attorney Richard Mithoff and his wife, Ginni, who were honored during the evening with the first Ben Taub Humanitarian Award. The Mithoffs requested that \$10 million from a tobacco settlement fee awarded to Mr. Mithoff be retained by the county and allocated instead to the Hospital District Foundation, to be used for children's health care initiatives. Mithoff negotiated a \$2.275 billion settlement with the tobacco industry in 1998 for hospital districts across the state, including Harris County. Although Mithoff initially performed preliminary work on the case at no fee, he was awarded \$20 million for his work.

"Ginni and I are very honored to receive this award and to be part of a foundation dedicated to children's health needs," said

Richard Mithoff. The couple dedicated the award to "our parents, who taught us to share and to our children, who are happy and healthy and gave us a reason to share."

A Children's Health Advisory Committee, led by Dr. Jeff Starke, chief of pediatric services at Ben Taub General Hospital, and Dr. Jose Garcia, chief of pediatric services at Lyndon B. Johnson General Hospital, will decide how the funds will be spent. Ginni Mithoff will serve as a member of the committee.

J. Evans Attwell, chairman of the Foundation's Development Committee presented the award.

"In the year 2001, it is the Foundation's hope to raise matching funds equal to or greater than this enormously generous fund allocation from the Mithoffs. It is our goal to raise funds for expanding mobile health, enhancing pediatric facilities, endowing the BOOKS literacy program, expanding mammography services to underserved women, and expanding our mobile pediatric immunization program, just to name a few," he said.

Attwell also explained that the Ben Taub Humanitarian Award was established by the Foundation to recognize the philanthropic endeavors of the late Ben Taub. "His generosity, interest and advocacy for health care for the underserved are well known," Attwell said. H. Ben Taub, great nephew of Mr. Taub, serves as chairman of the Foundation board.

Larry Finder, current chairman of the Board of Managers, spoke to the audience about the Hospital District of today. "From a humble beginning with one hospital-the old Jefferson Davis Hospital-and an annual operating budget of \$9 million, the Hospital District today is comprised of three hospitals, a network of community health centers, an HIV/AIDS specialty clinic, a dental center, school-based clinics, two mobile units, and satellite clinics at homeless shelters," Finder said, noting that \$9 million today would not get the district past four days of service.

Arnold and four other members of the original seven-member board-Quentin R. Mease, Robert Gillette, Gerald D. Hines and Don A. Horn-were recognized for their dedication during the early days of the district. And special tribute was paid to the late Winifred Wallace and Aaron Farfel.

Honorary chairperson for the Jubilee was Eleanor McCollum and chairperson was Ann Brinkerhoff. Houston Chronicle Chairman Richard J.V. Johnson served as master of ceremony. Guests left the celebration with a piece of history-bricks salvaged from the demolition of the Jefferson Davis Hospital, built in 1938 and demolished in 1999.



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