

Cancer Treatment Research Foundation

The Cancer Treatment Research Foundation wanted to create an extraordinary fundraiser and celebration for their 15th anniversary. Our production team helped them execute a memorable night under the painted starry sky of the Aragon Ballroom for "Midnight in Marrakech." Inspired by the drama and action of a Moroccan marketplace, Event Architects created a spin on the typical non-profit fundraiser in November 2006.

Event Architects fused elements of a traditional elegant gala with themes from a Moroccan marketplace to help them raise an astounding \$1.3 million dollars in one single night in November 2006.

Guests entered into a Moroccan marketplace in downstairs of Chicago's majestic Aragon Ballroom for a pre-dinner reception. The entrance of the Aragon Ballroom was transformed into a souk straight out of Marrakech. The lobby was lined with vendor shops selling goods and items for CTRF's sake. Passed hors d'oeuvres twisted through the buyers and sellers while a trio provided live Moroccan percussion and strings that echoed through the lobby. To add extra glamour, red velvet ropes and a brand new 2007 Cadillac Escalade were featured between the main doors and offered guests a chance to win a two year lease.

With resonating chimes, the crowd was signaled to move upstairs and into the main ballroom. A VIP reception decorated in the style of Rick's Café Americain occurred in the ballroom's private side bar while other guests admired enjoyed cocktails and bid on silent auction items. A henna artist tattooed guests with ornate designs, and a snake charmer enamored the crowd.

A memorable dinner program began with a lovely speech from CTRF's founder. Emcees, newscasters Brian Jenkins and Nancy Loo, kept the evenings schedule tight and interesting. Delicious African cuisine was presented by chosen caterers, The Entertaining Company.

Short interviews and video vignettes offered guests an intimate view of CTRF's mission. These video installations were presented on two large screens flanking the main stage. These screens also projected live shots of the stage and podium so that every guest in the ballroom could easily see the action on stage. Everyone had a comfortable seat.

The first auction featured great prizes including a diamond necklace, a trip to Marrakech and even a private dinner provided by The Entertaining Company. A spirited auctioneer worked the crowd and got paddles in the air.

The second auction allowed guests to "Fund-A-Grant" in order to directly finance breakthrough cancer research. To everyone's delight, the fundraising goals of the evening were far surpassed as \$1.3 million was raised.

Billy Davis, Jr. and Marilyn McCoo from the Grammy winning act The 5th Dimension, and Chicago's own variety band The Associates, helped the audience celebrate as they danced on well past midnight in Marrakech.

Design concepts echoed Moroccan art and culture. The theme of the event perfectly coordinated with the stunning Aragon Ballroom, which was designed in the hay day of the 1920s.



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The Marketplace

We created custom canopies from panels of silk for the lobby marketplace. Each canopied shop featured vendors and sponsors from the Chicago area, including The Spice House, Canterbury Shoppe and Accessible Accessories. All vendors donated a percentage of their sales to CTRF.

Burlap sacks, African spices and barrels created a “just imported” atmosphere. All vendors’ sellable items were displayed in these intricate thematic settings.

Table Designs

Square tables filled the ballroom floor. The tables were covered in punchy overlays and topped with donated floral centerpieces.

A Midnight Sky

Oversized silk lanterns mirrored a Moroccan outdoor festival. Our creative team designed exciting lanterns to compliment the space.

AV Equipment

The electrical and AV equipment for this event made all the difference. Cordless microphones, large projection screens and quality sound equipment kept everyone close to the action.

