

# Manilow Among Steve Chase Humanitarian Award Winners

As participants in the Frank Sinatra Starkey Hearing Foundation Celebrity Invitational golf tournament were winding down their festivities with a black-tie gala in Indian Wells, about 20 miles to the east, the Convention Center in Palm Springs was the site for the 15th anniversary of the Steve Chase Humanitarian Awards, one of the Desert season's most popular and well-attended black-tie galas.

Chase, a much-loved and respected local interior designer and philanthropist, was a major supporter of the Desert AIDS Project, a 25-year old organization that provides care, prevention and support services to those living with, affected by, or at-risk for HIV and AIDS — all in a geographic area that is greater than the state of Massachusetts.

Hosted by the still-beautiful trio of Morgan Fairchild, Linda Gray and Donna Mills, this year's award recipients included Palm Springs resident Barry Manilow, whose good friend Susanne Somers presented the honor to him; singer/actress Kristin Chenoweth; and dancer/actress, Bebe Neuwirth. Awards also were presented to Dr. Anthony Fauci, a Presidential Medal of Freedom recipient, who has devoted most of his professional life advancing the understanding and treatment of HIV/AIDS; Bill Jones, AIDS activist; and, Harriet Goldberg, Desert AIDS Project supporter.

The evening's entertainment was provided by the still-dynamic Diahann



**FRANCES ALLEN**  
Desert Roundup

Carroll. However, not even the enthralling Diahann could compete with two spellbinding a cappella performances given that night. One was *One Voice*, sung by Barry Manilow in recognition of the song's special significance to the victims of the massive fires in Australia, and the other *You'll Never Know*, was sung by Kristin Chenoweth in tribute to her college music instructor, who died of AIDS.

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The Coachella Valley is fortunate to have two outstanding facilities dedicated to providing treatment for alcoholism and drug dependency. One, the more well known, is the Betty Ford Center in Rancho Mirage, begun and still watched over by the former first lady. The other, older and less celebrity-favored, is the non-profit ABC Recovery Center in Indio.

Now in its 46th year, the ABC Recovery Center provides a complete continuum of care—based on 12-step principles offered in a peer-oriented setting—for people who suffer from alcohol and drug addiction. In addition to more traditional programs, the center also offers a specialized perinatal program to meet the needs of expectant mothers struggling with substance abuse. Newborn babies stay with their mothers in a specialized nursery, where local obstetricians care for them, and their mothers receive par-



**FIRESTONE AWARD**—Richard Milanovich (left) was the recipient of the Ambassador Leonard K. Firestone award of merit by Indio's ABC Recovery Center. He is joined at the ceremony by his wife Melissa Milanovich, Joan Rivers, Jim Houston, Jackie Wilson with Jackie Lee Houston (seated).

Photo by Sherri Breyer



**A LUCKY GUY**—Jim Casey of Integrated Wealth Management joins three Hollywood actress beauties—Morgan Fairchild (left), Linda Gray and Donna Mills (right)—at the 15th Steve Chase Humanitarian awards gala in the Palm Springs Convention Center.

enting training. Since the program's inception, 344 drug and alcohol free babies have been born to women living at the ABC Recovery Center.

All of this takes money, of course, and although Jim Houston—who volunteers his vast business acumen and experience to local non-profit organizations—says that dollar-for-dollar, the ABC Recovery Center receives more return on its funds spent than virtually any other Desert organization; additional funds are always needed. So, for the past 10 years, the ABC Recovery Center has presented a major fundraiser at which the Ambassador Leonard K. Firestone award of merit—in honor of the Firestone family's commitment to the center—is given to a worthy recipient. How worthy? The first recipient was Betty Ford.

Last week, it was the pleasurable duty of Jim and Jackie Lee Houston, last year's recipients of the Firestone award, to present it to this year's honoree, their close friend Richard Milanovich, chairman of the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians.

For more than 20 years as tribal council chair, Milanovich has not only presided over a period of growth for his tribe, but has been the driving force behind such major undertakings as buying the Spa Hotel in 1992, the addition of the Spa Resort Casino in 1995, construction of the Agua Caliente Casino in 2003, and the just

completed entertainment venue at the Agua Caliente Casino.

Yet, none of this qualifies him for the Firestone award. What distinguishes Milanovich is the constant caring for his community, tribal or not, and the generosity of he and his tribe. Plus, I would think that the world is near its end if I were to ever see Chairman Milanovich without a 1,000-watt smile on his face.

Hats off to the evening's and ABC board chair Jacqueline Wilson, who oversaw a flawless event which included 90 minutes of hilarious entertainment from a still vibrant and youthful-looking, even if admittedly plastically-enhanced, Joan Rivers.

More information about the ABC Recovery Center is available at 760-342-6616.

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Remember that old adage about a snowball having no chance, you know where? Well, we have it on good authority that Norway-based Danske Bank may be throwing a few financial snowballs into the stalled Ritz-Carlton renovation project in Rancho Mirage.

If the deal goes through, and it's always iffy with snowballs in the desert, those readers for whom luxury is an expectation may be able to ring in the new year under a diamond-starred sky atop the mesa on which the hotel is build, 200 feet above the desert floor in Rancho Mirage. **CD**

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