

# THE COMMERCIAL APPEAL

## PARTYING WITH A PURPOSE

Joe Wieronski and a former co-worker were young bachelors working for Askew Nixon Ferguson Architects when they decided to host their first charity event in 1988.

“I think they did it just to meet girls,” joked Lee Askew, founding partner at ANF Architects.

From those humble beginnings, the semiannual gathering -- better known as the Architects’ Party -- has evolved into a Memphis social tradition that attracts hundreds of partygoers and has raised about \$300,000 for charities.

The 20th anniversary spring party Saturday benefited Ronald McDonald House of Memphis, which provides a free “home away from home” to families of children undergoing treatment at St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital.

“It was really wonderful to work with Ronald McDonald House,” said Wieronski, a partner at ANF Architects who continues to host the event two decades later. “What they do is so important, and we wanted to help in their great work.”

Ronald McDonald House executive director Caron Byrd said community support is critical to the organization’s success. She applauded ANF Architects for its dedication to charitable causes and noted both the perfect weather and setting for the

party.

“We’re very pleased and honored to be part of this wonderful Memphis tradition,” she said. “The building is beautiful, and the grounds are perfect for this type of event. They do a great job with their parties.”

For fundraisers and art openings, ANF Architects’ office in Midtown transforms into a festive party venue -- a seamless transition for a building designed not only to provide an enjoyable work environment but to serve as an art gallery and setting for social, civic and business gatherings.

ANF Architects treated the roughly 350 guests -- including employees, clients, associates and friends -- to live music and a viewing of paintings by recently deceased local artist Charlie Miller.

Bill Berger, a civil engineer with SSR Ellers, has been attending the Architects’ Party for eight years.

“It’s a fun way to spend a night, especially when it’s to support a great cause,” he said. “I always have a great time at these parties.”

The fundraisers are a perfect fit for a firm that places a high priority on maintaining a fun workplace while also giving back to the community, Askew said.

Upcoming events include a “Taste of

Caribe” party featuring Cuban food, Latin music and Dominican Republic cigars, as well as the fall Architects’ Party. Both events will benefit the International Children’s Heart Foundation.

“We’ve been happy to support a lot of great charities over the years,” Askew said. “We like to try a lot of different formulas, both to entertain our guests and to help out various worthwhile causes.”

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Susan Wolfe and Jim Spiller (left) were among the hundreds who supported the Ronald McDonald House benefit during the 20th Annual Architect’s Party at Askew Nixon Ferguson Architects on Union Avenue on Saturday.

