

30th Anniversary Sol Business Awards Wow Guests in Bel Air &

Honor Mayor Villaraigosa, Hollywood Producer Moctezuma Esparza

LOS ANGELES -- With a moonlit sky and a glamorous French chateau providing the backdrop, the Latin Business Association (LBA) celebrated its 30th anniversary at the 2006 Sol Business Awards, June 9, by wowing guests, which included actress Maria Conchita Alonso, Lupe Ontiveras and actor Jacob Vargas, with the unique garden setting and establishing a new standard of excellence for the organization.

"The LBA demonstrated that it could create an exciting gala event that captures the entrepreneurial spirit and energy of the Hispanic business community, with a new vision of growth, innovation, and united leadership," said LBA Chairman Rick Sarmiento. "In one night, we raised the bar of expectation and set a new course for the organization's future. It's a tribute to the hard work of our board." Sarmiento also recognized Gala Co-Chairs Dan Gutierrez and Ruth Lopez-Novodor (past LBA Chair) for their hard work especially Daniel Gutierrez who is a current board members whose "incredible work is evident in tonight's spectacular event," said Sarmiento. Held in the garden of the Rose Chateau in Bel Air, the open-air party featured a gourmet Latin cuisine prepared by Wolfgang Puck, several open bars mixing mojitos and margaritas, Salsa and Spanish Flamenco music and a series of amenity tents that featured spa and beauty services, in addition to fine tequilas, teas chocolates, cigars and other sophisticated treats.

For 30 years, the Sol Business Awards Gala have recognized the exceptional contributions of leaders in the business, corporate, political and entertainment sectors that encourage the ongoing growth of the Latino business community. The 2006 gala was certainly no exception. To highlight the evening, Sarmiento presented the 2006 Sol Chairman's Award to Los Angeles Honorable Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, a longtime friend of the LBA dating back to his days as Speaker of the California State Assembly. The Mayor praised the organization's new leadership and direction.

"Thirty years ago we were invisible. Here we are now sitting in Bel Air...under the air with a great young president (Sarmiento)," said Mayor Villaraigosa. "I'm watching him and I'm saying, 'God, do we have talent... Talent that understands, we've got a dream, not dream small, dream big, be bold, be strong, be united, come together, because it's our time'."

The LBA also presented the Sol Honorary Chairman's Award to Hollywood film and television producer Moctezuma Esparza, whose credits include "Walkout," the 2006 HBO film chronicling the 1968 East Los Angeles high school boycott and walkout; "Selena" and the "Milagro Beanfield War."

In accepting the honor, Esparza recounted how the Jewish-American community in the United States established itself several generations ago by supporting each other's businesses. He implored Latino business people to do likewise.

"It was very important what your chairman said 'You must do business with each other,'" Esparza said, referring to comments by Sarmiento earlier in the evening.

In addition to Mayor Villaraigosa and Esparza, Sol Business Awards were also presented to LBA member companies American Custom Coach, Support Services of America and KAZA-TV show *Despertar* and host, author/business women Mabel Katz.

"I was surprised and very proud to receive such a prestigious award from the LBA," said Katz. "Despertar is a product of my love for my people, and it's wonderful to receive this recognition for doing something good for the Hispanic community in Los Angeles."

During the event, much of the buzz centered on the event's unique setting and the large sell out crowd of more than 600 Hispanic and business leaders.

"Great venue, great people and great networking opportunities for all involved," said Martha Valverde, the president of Medifam of California, a health care access company based in Orange County. "It felt like the Latino business Academy Awards. It was far beyond my expectations."

The gala was held in the garden of the Rose Chateau, an exact replica of the Petit Trianon at Versailles, Marie Antoinette's summer palace, built originally by the owner of Architectural Digest, Paige Rense.

The garden was lined with VIP Amenity Tents, interior designed to correspond with the six Latin countries of Mexico, Spain, Brazil, Argentina, Cuba and Peru. Tent interiors created by six of Los Angeles' top Latino interior designers featured spa, cosmetic and beauty services, in addition to fine tequila, champagne, wine, teas, tonics, chocolates and cigars

The LBA also hosted a silent auction to benefit Padres Contre El Cancer, which helped to raise contributions for the nonprofit organization. Auction included a private tour of the Museum of Latin American Art, a weekend at the Beverly Hills Hotel, body treats, personal gourmet chef at-homes and other upscale surprises.

In summing up the event, Maria Conchita Alonso enjoyed the people and the ambiance created by the gala. "The people were very warm. It felt like everybody knew each other," said Ms. Alonso, who also enjoyed a couple of the VIP Amenity Tents. "Everyone was having a great time."

Up next for LBA is its new Latino Global Business Conference, scheduled for October, date and information to be announced soon. For more details and other upcoming LBA events, go to www.lbausa.com.