

House of Hope benefit glows by candlelight

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"Dancing in the Dark" topped the hit parade years ago, and while it's a lovely song, it was certainly not what the House of Hope envisioned as the theme of its annual Harvest of Hope party on Saturday, Oct. 14, at the Nesmith House in Lowell.

But that's exactly what happened in the dance tent next to the house when all the lights went out in Belvidere. For a while it was fun and the dancers continued to pulse to the music of Ralph Graham, making do with their cell phones and some decorative candles, until a vicious gust of wind turned the heated tent into a small Siberia.

The chilled dancers trooped indoors where the party for some 125 guests was merrily rolling along. Most of the dinner -- tenderloin beef and turkey from Bianco and Sons and Two Chefs Catering -- had already been served, and the desserts were beckoning in the golden light of scores of glass-enclosed votive candles, as shadows floated intriguingly on the walls of the elegant rooms.

Elaine Crandall, director of historic homes for Middlesex Community College, which owns the Nesmith, said that in her 12 years of service at the Nesmith, there was only one other blackout, and that had been due to a hurricane. She and her staff hustled about to see that everyone was comfortable.

A brief business period went on as planned, with Deb Chausse, House of Hope director, and Nels Palm, president of the board, cheering partygoers with good news about the agency's projects.

In the 20 years since the House of Hope was founded, it has fulfilled its mission of providing shelter for homeless families for more than 7,300 nights. Palm said he was "certain that we can accomplish so much more in the next 20 years."

Chausse thanked sponsors for producing the anniversary event: The Thibault Foundation, Trinity EMS, Butler Bank, Mass. Electrical Contractors, Kevin and Janice Roden and Boyle Transportation.

The board bade farewell to outgoing members Doris Morrisette, Judy Creegan, Elkin Montoya and Richard Jumpp, and welcomed new board members Andrew Boyle, Jack O'Connor, Marc Teal and Peter Zarrilla.

Having a great time were Bill and Alice Lehmann, Ellen and Edward Cataldo, Jack and Brenda Hassett, Nels and Peggy Palm, Katie Palm and Lyne Chastaine, Brian and Kathleen Bush, John Thibault and Elaine Zouzas Thibault, Dan and Brenda O'Brien, Dan and Tarina Mansur, party chairman Deborah Lemos and her husband, William, Paul and Pauline Lambert, Richard and Judy Jumpp, Michael and Kathy Holland, Lisa and Dr. Lou Stylos, Mary Jane Creegan, Kevin and Janice Roden, Doreen and Denis Cormier, Patrick and Jean Bianco, Brad and Linda Emerson, John and Linda Chemaly, Maria Infante, Evan Shapiro and Belinda Juran, the Joseph Julianellos, Judi Rednarz and Steve Wallace, Mrs. Charles Dolan, Jill Cole and Dion Adamy, Pat and Lynne Pollino, Bob and Margaret Leighton, Eleanor Belanger, Dr. and Mrs. Michael Sargent, Jody and Pam White, Vicki Fanning, June Messina, Ann Marie Bradley, Judy Lemire, Marianne Staid, Edward Weza.