

Society: Buck leads rock show for San Miguel Schools

By Mary Cameron Frey
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San Miguel Schools began in 1995 in a convent dining room in the Back of the Yards neighborhood. Its founders, Brother Ed Siderewicz and Gordon Hannon, had a staff of four, 18 students and a small grant. Today, there are two campuses: one in Back of the Yards serving mostly Hispanics, and one in Austin, with mostly black students. To date, the middle schools have graduated 300 students, 99% of whom go on to either attend high school or pursue a GED. **John A. Buck**, founder, chairman and CEO of John Buck Co., is chairman of the board of San Miguel Schools and will attend its fundraiser on Thursday.

CRAIN'S: How did you learn of San Miguel Schools?

MR. BUCK: I was on the board of Cristo Rey Jesuit High School for five years, and a fellow board member, Marilou von Ferstel (a director at Walgreen Co.), asked me to look at these middle schools that needed help. I met Brother Ed Siderewicz and decided to get involved because it seemed a very worthy place. They are private, Catholic middle schools sponsored by the Christian Brothers, who focus on poor youth.

Why did this cause speak to you?

I've been involved in education in the inner city for 27 years through the Archdiocese of Chicago's Big Shoulders Fund. Education is the most important thing in America and an area where we're not doing a really good job. My parents were great proponents of education, and when I attended Notre Dame, there were always programs devoted to low-income education and opportunities to go into the inner city as teachers. In Chicago, we used to have 300,000 children in Catholic schools. Now we have 100,000. Without the Big Shoulders Fund, we'd have even less.

What can you tell us about the party?

It is being held in conjunction with the Museum of Contemporary Art's 40th anniversary exhibit, "Art and Rock and Roll since 1967," and will feature special performances by Ides of March, Ronnie Rice, Off Broadway, Gary Loizzo of the American Breed, James "J.Y." Young and Lawrence Gowan of Styx, and members of the Lovin' Spoonful. The food will be provided by Wolfgang Puck Catering and there will be live and silent auctions. It's going to be a swinging party.

What are your views on philanthropy at this time in your life?

If I have been focused on anything, it has been in the area of education. The Spring Fling benefit John Buck Co. organizes each year is always youth-oriented. There is still a lot of work to be done, and most of the time it's more frustrating than fun. But it's very rewarding.

San Miguel Schools Chicago's "School of Rock" fundraiser

When: 6:30 p.m. Thursday

Where: Museum of Contemporary Art, 220 E. Chicago Ave.

How much: \$175 and up

Who'll be there: Around 300 supporters of the school

For more info: (773) 890-0233

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