



## **For Immediate Release**

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## **Post-Event Press Release: Domestic Harmony Foundation's 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Fundraising Gala**

On Saturday, April 17<sup>th</sup> 2010, the Domestic Harmony Foundation held its 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Fundraiser Dinner at the Greens at Half Hollow in Melville. The elegant evening featured esteemed speakers, an enticing comedian and talented musicians who were joined by approximately 200 glittering donors and supporters.

The pre-dinner cocktail hour was abuzz with people from all walks of life showing support of DHF's cause against domestic violence in the South Asian, Muslim and Middle Eastern communities. The delicious appetizers fed the networking hour while guests learned about each other and the organization. A books sale and a raffle signup followed and then the guests were directed to the main program. A recapitulation of DHF's history and purpose kicked off the event, including an overview of the activities for the year, presented by the Executive Director, Shaida Khan.

The guest speakers of the evening were scholar and author Laleh Bakhtiar and activist and author Shamita Das Dasgupta. Books by both authors were available for sale throughout the event. Dr. Bakhtiar, the first Iranian-American Muslim woman translator of the Quran, presented on a much-disputed verse of the Quran which has sadly been the center of many domestic violence issues within the Muslim community. Dr. Dasgupta brought the issue of domestic violence even closer to the audience by connecting with them on a universal level and making the guests feel the importance of their individual responsibilities in eradicating this heinous epidemic.

Perhaps the most touching and heart-rending part of the program was a survivor's story of her ordeals, her emotions, the effect on her children, and the aftermath. The survivor was a singularly courageous and remarkable woman whose calmness of voice paired perfectly with the gravity of what she related. She narrated her story of two decades of abuse, fear and indelible patience. She shared one of her daughter's journal entries, which featured heartwarming words of praise, worry and love for her mother when she herself could not find the words to talk about her situation. In the most deserved fashion, the survivor received a standing ovation from the audience following her brave and stirring speech. A beautiful song sung by one of DHF's members put a final touch on the most heart-wrenching part of the entire evening.

Following dinner, the audience was treated to a special DHF film showing, created by independent filmmaker and producer Jennifer Maharajh. The film was shocking, moving, and altogether intensely real in its depiction of cycles in an abusive relationship. The stress remained on the availability of help in these situations – from organizations like DHF.

The evening took on a much more lighthearted tone after the film when the spectacular renowned comedian Maysoon Zayid took the stage. The Palestinian-American actress brightened up the room instantaneously with her outrageously humorous and even poignant jokes. A raffle drawing and musical entertainment by the talented Vishal Bhalla and his accompanying singers completed the evening's festivities. Raffle prizes included a trip for two to Cairo, Egypt, tickets to US Open Men's Final, tickets to the American Ballet Theatre, and many more. The musicians performed a variety of songs in different languages, putting their heart and soul into each and every one.

Given the resounding success of the Domestic Harmony Foundation's 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Fundraiser, it's hoped that the upcoming years will provide even greater chances of improvement and lead the community into an age of greater awareness – and consequently, elimination – of domestic violence.