

## SPOTLIGHT ON WESTSIDE NON-PROFITS



**Above from left:** Jack Valenti, Barry Meyer, Senator Patrick Leahy

**Right:** Front row- Tricia Leigh Fisher, Marc Cherry, Joely Fisher; Back row- Ruta Leigh, Debbie Reynolds, Connie Stevens



# Giving Back, Making a Difference

By Adrienne Papp



**T**HE WORLD HAS BECOME A STRANGE PLACE. THE IDEALS OF COMMUNITY, SUPPORT AND COMPASSION SEEM TO BE THE LEAST OF OUR PRIORITIES. ISOLATION AND

A FEELING OF DISCONNECTION ARE NOT ONLY MAJOR CONTRIBUTORS TO OUR 21ST-CENTURY DISEASES, BUT ALSO TO THE DESTRUCTION OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT. THIS MONTH I ATTENDED A NUMBER OF EXTRAORDINARY EVENTS PUT ON BY SOME OF THE OLDEST CHARITIES IN LOS ANGELES, AND I MET SOME AMAZING PEOPLE. I FELT A SENSE OF BELONGING, COMMUNITY AND EVEN OF FAMILY IN THEIR PRESENCE-AND THESE DAYS, SUCH FEELINGS HAVE BECOME ALL TOO RARE.

### A night to remember with The Thalians and The American Jewish Committee

Thalia, muse of comedy and poetry, and symbol of medicine and service to community dates to mid-second century Rome. The Thalia legend inspired The Thalians, an internationally renowned charitable organization that brings joy, health and renewal into the lives it touches.

Over the last 51 years the Thalians raised a remarkable \$30 million and have been the driving force behind the Thalians Mental Health Center at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center.

The center has become an internationally recognized world leader in treatment for mental illness, which by the way is our nation's number one health problem.

The lavish gala on October 7 honored Desperate Housewives creator Marc Cherry along with Connie Stevens and daughters Joely Fisher and Tricia Leigh Fisher. Previous honorees of The Thalians include Whoopi Goldberg, Liza Minelli, Mary Tyler Moore, Shirley MacLaine, Lana Turner, and Rita Hayworth.

I cannot help but mention my favorite part of the evening. A six-week-old baby tiger was brought on stage, thanks to Wildlife Way Station, an internationally recognized exotic animal haven. (I was lucky enough to sneak in a photo with the little cub backstage-talk about finger sucking for comfort!) Wildlife Way Station is famous for its charitable efforts to rescue and rehabilitate wild animals and is situated on 160 acres in California's Angeles National Forest. You can take an African safari, get to know the inhabitants, and have the time of your life! For sponsorship and other information log on to [www.wildlifewaystation.org](http://www.wildlifewaystation.org).

Extraordinary artist Thom Bierdz is a dedicated supporter of the Thalians. Both his art and exceptional life story have appeared in numerous national magazines and television shows, including Entertainment Tonight, NBC News, and Fox News. His heartbreaking family story translates into his unique works of art and remarkable book, *Forgiving Troy*, recounting his journey to understanding and forgiving his brother for killing their mother and then committing suicide. Thom has triumphed over tragedy and uses his experiences as a platform to create art that is like no other. To view Thom's

work please visit [www.thombierdz.com](http://www.thombierdz.com).

To find out more about the Thalians log on to [www.thethalians.com](http://www.thethalians.com) or call 310-423-1040.

The American Jewish Committee (AJC, [www.ajc.org](http://www.ajc.org)) presented Barry Meyer, Chairman and CEO of Warner Bros. Entertainment with the Dorothy and Sherrill C. Corwin Human Relations Award at a gala dinner held in his honor on October 19 at the Regent Beverly Wilshire Hotel. Keynote speaker, Senator Patrick Leahy gave a heartfelt speech putting the light on human rights and the First Amendment. Jack Valenti, former President and CEO of the Motion Picture Association of America presented the award.

Tolerance, understanding, cooperation, compassion, humanitarianism and charitable activities were the themes of this most unforgettable evening. The Committee was established 100 years ago and focuses on promoting pluralism; shared civic values; protecting human rights and combating abuses and bigotry. It also plays an activist role in social justice. "Love your country, question your government, be a true patriot," encouraged Senator Leahy, an outspoken defender of human rights. "Anger, resentment, ego and pride is wrong. Humility, generosity, truth and compassion are the right thing to do, which is what Barry Meyer represents," he added.

In addition to Barry Meyer's significant professional success, he has made many contributions to civic and charitable activities. Under his leadership, Warner Bros. has consistently ranked as the strongest, most profitable and best-positioned studio in the industry. When I asked what message he

**Below:** Artist Thom Bierdz at work; Adrienne Papp with baby tiger from Wild Life Way Station

