

The stars came out in Riyadh during May

by Andrew Mead



Over 250 members of the expat community in Riyadh gathered on the hallowed turf at Venue One and dug deep into their pockets. Sir Sherard and Lady Bridget Cowper-Coles once again opened their garden for an evening organised by the RGBB, and initially sponsored by AXA and the Saudi Hollandi Bank, to raise money for the ICING Charity.

The target for the evening had been to raise about SR30,000 to assist the school in the Marikh Valley outside of Jeddah with essential teaching materials.

Prompted (we suspect) by one or more of the School Governors (thanks Paul), Julia Jefferson from the Multinational startled the entire assembly by offering a most munificent donation of SR12000 to start the evening. Her generosity seemed to hit the right spot and the organisers spent the remainder of the evening inundated with pledges from others.

Peter Howarth Lees, John Arkley, Gail Tisdal and Mick Flaherty were soon up to the plate to deliver a pledge from the Riyadh Community Theatre for an amazing SR10,000.

Donations from the Round Table and the Caledonian Society were matched by a personal donation from he who shall only be known as 'Vicar'. His anonymity only exposed to those who remember the 'Fete'!

Another anonymous donor, known only to those who live near him at Arabian Homes (thanks Sean) flashed the cash to the tune of SR2000 and in addition to his personal donation persuaded his 'table-mates' to spend even more on the raffle. Mention of the raffle can only be made alongside mention of Geraldine, Sara, Jackie, Sue, Soriya, and I'm sure, several others who sold every raffle ticket on the premises collecting over SR20,000 in the proceeds.



Not being able to spend their cash on raffle tickets, the "Two Ronnies & their friends" dipped in together to raise a staggering SR12500 in personal donations. Something we suspect, (but can't prove) to do with "Kim Beaumont" using her unique persuasion techniques on Rob, Paul & Bryan.

It wasn't just generosity with cash. Karen Bell from the British Embassy initially won the bmi donated return airticket to the UK but chose to put it back into the draw claiming that her 'employer' provided all the tickets she could use!

At some point when the figure had reached an incredible SR95000, Paul Archer volunteered SR5000 on behalf of his daughter Melanie to round the total off to SR100,000... But it didn't stop there.

Paul Ross from DDB Worldwide committed his company to a sizable chunk in return for a mention over the mic prompting the boys from Al Hokair to try and top out the proceedings by making the largest donation of the evening for something similar.



Simon Ward and Paul Hicks caused a bit of a stir when after reporting their initial donation to the assembly suddenly doubled it... prompting a few questions concerning the amount of mineral water they were drinking!!! My own attempts to control the evening by seizing the microphone almost descended into farce when one 'pledger' volunteered cash to discover if all the Kilts being worn that evening were being worn by 'true' Scotsmen. And causing almost as big a stir was a donation from the Dutch Friesian Cow Society of Riyadh who donated the proceeds of the sale of one of their herd that night!

An incredible night, and an incredible total. Over SR135000 was raised on the night from the Stars in Riyadh. See over for just a few of the photos.

