

Atlanta Derby gala 'huge success'



Norma Barnes, executive director of the Community Council of Metropolitan Atlanta, sports a black and white sundress with matching hat at the Kentucky Derby Gala fundraiser in Atlanta.

ATLANTA – An impressive lineup of fashionable ladies and gentlemen poured into SPACE Atlanta, located in the city's historic West End, on May 1 to celebrate the 136th Kentucky Derby and support the Community Council of Metropolitan Atlanta's (CCMA) "race to save a generation."

The event drew more than 300 people who tilted their hats and placed their bets on the odds they can make a difference in the lives of metropolitan Atlanta's at-risk youth and young black males served by the CCMA.

"This was so exciting," said Sarah Howard, who attended the event. "I've always wanted to go to the Kentucky Derby, but I didn't expect it to come to me in such grand style".

John Evans, who heads Operation Lead based in DeKalb County, said he enjoyed supporting the event.

"It was my big chance to go to the Derby, since I couldn't get to the real thing in Kentucky," Evans said.

The Kentucky Derby Gala was the brainchild of Norma Joy Barnes, founder of the Priority Male Initiative and Executive Director of the CCMA.

Amidst the allure of white linen

décor and the movie theater screens, partygoers were treated to live entertainment by the Titanium Groove Band and to a lesson in the rich history of the Kentucky Derby. CCMA paid tribute to African American jockeys, who once dominated the event. It is a little-known fact that 13 of 15 jockeys in the first-ever Kentucky Derby were black.

Masters of Ceremony Rojene Bailey and Melissa Redding topped off the grandeur of the evening when the "Best in Show" hat contest got under way. First and second place winners Denise Pope and Ann Harris donned their fashionable hats as they picked up their prizes.