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Rockov goes all in for hospital

By **SHELBY HODGE** Copyright 2009 Houston Chronicle
Sept. 29, 2009, 5:57PM



Dave Rossman For the Chronicle

Roxanne Murcia and Kolja Rockov proved to be lucky partners at the Texas Children's Cancer Center casino night at the Houston Downtown Aquarium.

No rubber chicken, no depressing videos. Linn Energy CFO **Kolja Rockov** had his own idea about fun and fundraising.

And he ran with it Thursday night as chair of the inaugural Texas Children's Cancer Center Casino Night at the Houston Downtown Aquarium.

The whole thing was his idea. He wanted to give something back. Texas Children's was a worthy cause. He put it together in four months without a committee, raised \$100,000 in underwriting and by the time the curtain went up last week, he already had \$150,000 committed.

Add to that proceeds from the sale of additional poker chips. The race was on to accumulate the most chips in order to win the grand prize — four hours on board one of XOJET's big birds, valued at \$40,000. **Jay Taylor**, representing the private jet charter company, spent the first three weeks of his life in ICU at Texas Children's — thus his willingness to arrange for the major donation.

Among those dancing, dining and trying their hands at black jack, craps and the roulette wheel were Linn Energy CEO **Michael Linn** and wife **Carol**, RBC Capital Markets' **Rick Brice** and wife **Kristin**, BNP Paribas **Doug Liftman** and wife **Annette**, Barclays Capital's **Brad Hutchinson** and Royal Bank of Scotland's **Mark Lumpkin** and wife **Leslee**.

Another approach

A few days earlier the cancer center was beneficiary of the Celebration of Champions luncheon at the Hilton Americas-Houston, where **Sidney Fust**, **Judi McGee** and **Scott Basinger** chaired the second annual luncheon. Dr. **ZoAnn Dreyer** was honoree and former Rockets coach **Rudy Tomjanovich** served as "honorary champion."

New toque in town

You can't keep a great restaurateur down and **Alex Brennan-Martin** — still hoping for resurrection of Brennan's, which was destroyed during Hurricane Ike — moves full speed ahead with the opening in late October of two new eateries at Hotel Sorella in CityCentre — Bistro Alex and Café Rose. And with that comes news of the man in charge of the kitchens.

Brennan-Martin has just named **Juan Carlos Gonzales**, with years of experience in the Brennan's restaurant family as well as with Le Bernadin in New York, as executive chef for both the casual French-inspired, 35-seat Café Rose and the more sophisticated Brennan's-like Bistro Alex with seating for 160.

Late partying

Local hotel developer **Nick Massad** and wife **Vicki** hosted a party of a different stripe Saturday night — a cement-pouring soiree.

They gathered family and friends on the 24th floor of the Hilton Americas-Houston for a bird's eye view of the parade of 350 cement trucks pouring the foundation of their new Embassy Suites hotel, near Discovery Green downtown.

The couple, principals of American Liberty Hospitality, kicked off the party at 10 p.m. and continued entertaining the crowd until 2 a.m.

High style

Fashion designer **Arend Basile**, with serious experience in Paris with Givenchy, Galliano and Alexander McQueen, launched his Arend studio and couture salon last week to the applause of a pretty crowd.

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Replace One

Toasting the new salon on Elmen near River Oaks were **Lynn Wyatt, Denise Bush Bahr** and **Philip Bahr, Olga and Gerry Bush, Nidhika** and **Pershanth Mehta, Donatella** and **Fred Benckenstein, Mia Jones, Rania Daniel, Merhnaz Gill** and more.

California dreamin'

That would be **Edna Meyer-Nelson**, president of Richland Investments Inc. and board president of Houston Children's Charity, just back from Santa Monica where she and internationally renowned furniture designer **Vladimir Kagan** put the finishing touches on her new corporate retreat. The swank condo, complete with ocean views, is furnished almost entirely in Kagan's contemporary designs.

Meyer-Nelson, an avid golfer, is headed back in a few weeks to install a putting green on her broad terrace.

Sight 'ems

Dr. **Victor Rivera**, director of the Maxine Mesinger MS Comprehensive Care Center at Baylor College of Medicine, heading a table at Tony's. Guests chewed on details of the National Multiple Sclerosis Society's On the Move luncheon set for March. The table included luncheon chair **Franelle Rogers**, honorary chair **Emil Mesinger**, Baylor's Dr. **George Hutton** and MS Society officers **Kristen Stubbs, Taylor Mallia** and **Jenny Heidrick** ...

Houston Astro **Hunter Pence** dining at Mo's ... A Place for Steaks with Hollywood actress **Heidi Mueller**, Astros Hall of Fame broadcaster **Milo Hamilton, Cheryl H. Taylor** of Orlando and **Patricia** and **Randall Swearingen** ...

Texas Heart Institute president Dr. **Jim Willerson** lunching at Grotto 610 with his executive assistant **Marcia Strauss** and Port Commissioner **Elyse Lanier** ...

Children's Museum board members **Lance Gilliam, Jeff Bracken** and **Mike Plank** capping off a retreat at La Torretta Del Lago Resort & Spa with cocktails overlooking Lake Conroe ...

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Cincinnati Reds manager **Dusty Baker** lunching at Del Frisco's Double Eagle Steak House.

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