

Silver & Turquoise Ball Benefits Mission

Since 1994, the Silver & Turquoise Board of Hostesses has worked with the Patronato as an ally to promote stewardship of Mission San Xavier del Bac.

The Board of Hostesses, the prominent women's group of 50 community leaders along with 100 honorary members, presents the annual Silver & Turquoise Ball to celebrate Tucson's historic traditions and diverse culture. Proceeds benefit the ongoing restoration of Mission San Xavier. The 2016 Chair of the event is Sarah Congdon Leech, who also directs the Women of Purpose program, part of the global relief and development agency, World Concern.

The Silver & Turquoise Ball began 66 years ago as a potluck at the home of Isabella Greenway and today is one of Tucson's oldest and grandest events.

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66TH ANNUAL SILVER & TURQUOISE BALL PRESENTED BY SILVER & TURQUOISE BOARD OF HOSTESSES

Saturday, April 30

6:00pm

Arizona Inn – 2200 E. Elm St.

\$300 per person

Reservations required

silverandturquoiseball.org



PHOTOS: BRENT G. MATHEIS



San Xavier Mission on Endangered List

Annual Ball Supports Restoration

By Monica Surfaro Spigelman

The lime-washed adobe majesty of Mission San Xavier del Bac is a breathtaking sight west of Interstate 19.

Yet each day the desert takes more of a toll on this venerable antiquity completed in 1797.

Now the World Monuments Fund added this landmark to its 2016 cultural heritage watch list. This designation by a prestigious international advocacy group is securing new global support for this extraordinary house of worship, as well as hope that it will endure for centuries more.

The World Monuments Watch was launched in 1995 to call attention to imperiled heritage places around the world and facilitate conservation partnerships. Mission San Xavier, already a national historic landmark, is one of only two sites in the United States recognized on the 2016 watch list – and one of only 50 designated in 36 countries.

This global list of irreplaceable places is selected biennially by archaeology, architecture, art history and preservation experts with the intent of identifying world heritage sites endangered by the forces of nature or socio-political impact.

There's no group more proud of this new designation than Patronato San Xavier – the nonsectarian, nonprofit collective of community leadership that takes responsibility for preservation of the mission known as the "White Dove of the Desert." Since its founding in 1978, the Patronato has articulated a unified conservation vision and raised more than \$12 million over the past 19 years for ambitious and critical preservation projects. The Patronato now hopes to rally a wider international audience for the treasured site.

"We're eager to share appreciation

of this remarkable architectural and cultural wonder," said Miles Green, the new Patronato executive director. "As the mission gets the global recognition it deserves, the designation is a huge win for the state and our community."

The Patronato is dedicated to preserving the mission's historical significance as well its architectural beauty. Previous campaigns already have addressed 75 percent of the mission chapel's exterior renovation. The Patronato board is continually readjusting strategies to focus on emerging conservation issues.

At first the focus was on fixing urgent structural problems as well as preserving the interior artwork. Major emergency restoration and protection of the mission's foundation, walls and west tower were completed by 2009. More recently restoration efforts are focused on problems caused by the use of cement-based stucco in the 1950s, which trapped moisture and degraded the adobe. Now the Patronato has been racing to complete the public phase of a \$3 million campaign to restore the mission's east tower.

Restoration is delicate business, Green said, especially for the mission's recognizably unfinished east tower. "The goal of restoration is to preserve the building in its completed state – which means as left by the original builders in 1797," he said. The original plan did call for two matching towers, but the second was never completed. The tower will be restored and left without a dome.

Current restoration efforts are being carried out by a crew led by Danny Morales, whose family has worked on restoration at the mission across five generations.

This Patronato-directed campaign also focuses on meticulous conserva-

tion of the mission's interior, utilizing international and O'odham curators in an ongoing need to preserve, clean and minimize the impact of lost sections of artwork, decoration and statuary. "Even here there are preservation issues, because in some sections the artwork has been over-painted by subsequent attempts to repair or update," Green said.

In particular, the Immaculate Conception sculpture standing with three cherub angels at her feet over the main altar is now being painstakingly restored. The Patronato expects this unique, life-sized 18th century statuary, with its painted plaster over wood, silver and gold leaf decoration and vintage earrings, to be ready for unveiling in October, when the Patronato plans events tied to international World Monument Fund Watch Week celebrations.

With the Pima County Bond for Nature Conservation and Historic Preservation defeated this past election cycle, the Patronato continues to look for ways to engage and educate the general public about the inherent value of the architecture and cultural traditions that underlie the mission's rich heritage.

Visitorship is more than 200,000 annually, said Green, a New Zealand-born educator and businessman who first visited the mission as a student in the 1970s. He hopes the World Monument Fund exposure will help identify new resources and develop partnerships to build sustainable preservation efforts. "There's always a sense of urgency," Green said.

"We ask so much of this fragile resource yet we want to make sure it's preserved for future generations. I suspect the mission will continue to transform us as long as we are willing to support it."

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