

Feb. 28: A New Leaf's Camaraderie Gala

Written by Emily Glynn



If you reside in the Mesa area, chances are you already know. But do-gooders from North Scottsdale and Central Phoenix? Take note. The Valley's best-kept philanthropic secret is about to blow.

"We're kind of under the radar," says Gina Irons, Corporate Engagement and Special Events Manager at A New Leaf. For the past 44 years, the nonprofit organization has quietly provided programs and services across Greater Phoenix, including shelters for single men and women suffering from homelessness and domestic violence. It also operates the only family shelter in the East Valley.

The impact has been staggering. On average, A New Leaf serves 200,000 meals, provides 150,000 nights of shelter and hosts 12,000 counseling sessions per year. If you do the math, that's roughly 8.8 million meals, 6.6 million nights of shelter and 528,000 sessions since its founding in 1971.

The nonprofit is currently working on boosting its visibility and will continue to spread awareness on Saturday, Feb. 28 at its 31st annual Camaraderie Gala, hosted by April Warnacke of KTVK 3TV's "Good Morning! Arizona." The event is the organization's biggest fundraiser and will be held at the FireSky Resort and Spa in Scottsdale from 6 p.m. to 11 p.m.

Three-hundred guests are expected to attend the "Havana Nights" themed soiree, dressed in 1950's tropical-chic cocktail attire (think fedoras and pastel-colored *guayaberas* for the men; sexy, Caribbean-style island wear for the ladies). In addition to a highly anticipated speech by Honorary Chair David Rousseau, President of the Salt River Project, and both silent and live auctions, guests are invited to flamenco-dance the night away to the lazy riffs of classical Cuban guitar.

The main goal of the evening, however, is to garner hope for those in need. "[A lot of] little things go into creating a life, especially one with dignity," says Irons. "That's one thing we're really big on." turnanewleaf.org