

CRAIN'S

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From this week's Business of Life

Society: Foodies prepare forks for star-chef gala

By: [Mary Cameron Frey](#) March 17, 2008



*Common Threads was founded in 2004 by Art Smith, former personal chef to Oprah Winfrey and co-owner of Table 52, and his partner, artist Jesus Salguero. It works to educate children on the importance of health and nutrition and to foster an appreciation of cultural diversity through food. Guests at its gala will mingle with Food Network stars Paula Deen, Tyler Florence, Ming Tsai and Jacques Torres; Padma Lakshmi of "Top Chef," and local chefs Gale Gand (Tru), David Burke (Primehouse), Kevin Hickey (Four Seasons) and Matthias Merges (Charlie Trotter's). **Greg Cameron**, deputy director and chief*

development officer of the Museum of Contemporary Art, co-chairs the party with Amanda Puck, executive vice-president of public relations for the Experiential Agency.



MARY CAMERON FREY

CRAIN'S: How did you first become involved with Common Threads?

MR. CAMERON: I was invited to join the Apprentice Board by Amanda Puck, its chairman, in 2006. It seemed to be an organization that would fulfill an important need in the community and be a lot of fun, as well.

So you think it's important to the city as well.

Common Threads sends a message to the community that we care about the value of healthy eating. Through its after-school programming for kids ages 8 to 12, they learn to cook healthy ethnic cuisine; plant, harvest and prepare fresh veggies from the garden, and learn yoga, capoeira, tai chi and African dance. Remember, you tried Italian food long before you visited Italy, sampled French food before you went to Paris and feasted on brats right here at home before visiting Germany. We're expanding their horizons by introducing them to different cultures before they ever leave Chicago.

Can you tell us something about the party?

It will be held here at the MCA, with the building divided into the four corners of the world. There will be Chinese dragon dancers, Spanish flamenco dancers, Korean drummers and henna painting from India. Guests will be able to taste the food and learn about different cultures from the artists. There will be silent and live auctions and an after-party with John Legend. We've received great corporate support from Harris Bank, American Airlines, Whole Foods, Allen Bros., Sara Lee Corp. and United Healthcare.

How does this fit in with your personal views of philanthropy?

I've grown up in an environment that has always been about sharing and giving, and it's not always about money. Look at all the chefs who will be contributing their time and food at the party, helping a big team effort to make it successful.

Common Threads' Third Annual World Festival

When: 6 p.m. Monday

Where: Museum of Contemporary Art, 220 E. Chicago Ave.

How much: \$250 general admission; \$500 for VIP ticket that includes after-party at the James Hotel with a performance by Grammy winner John Legend

Who'll be there: A bunch of local chefs, personalities from the Food Network, corporate supporters and Chicago foodies

For more info: (312) 752-2674

Each Monday: Check out our photo slide show of top galas at ChicagoBusiness.com/society.

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