

SOCIETY: DON'T SAVE THE DATE

Social calendar's NATO-sized gap

Philanthropists used to the spring social whirl have something to look forward to this weekend: nothing.

While last weekend was packed with eight major fundraisers, this weekend is conspicuously gala-free. Nervous about traffic, protests and security restrictions associated with the NATO summit at McCormick Place, nonprofits that usually throw parties the third weekend in May rescheduled their events. The exception is the Morton Arboretum, whose fundraiser will be held Saturday night in Lisle, 40 miles from the city.

The hands-off weekend produced a pileup of parties on the second weekend in May.

"It definitely is a traffic jam," says Susan Fargo, board president of the Lincoln Park

Conservancy. Since its inception three years ago, the nonprofit's Glass House gala has taken place the second Friday in May, a weekend usually free of events that compete for conservancy board members.

This year, Glass House found itself competing with benefits for four other groups—the Art Institute of Chicago, Goodman The-

atre, Friends of the Park and the Erikson Institute. Ms. Fargo says all but Erikson's "siphoned off" traditional Glass House attendees, including honorary co-chairs Anstiss and Ronald Krueck, who were expected to attend the Art Institute opening celebration of the Roy Lichtenstein retrospective.

Ms. Fargo felt the pinch. A week before Glass House, individual ticket sales were down 33 percent from the year before, "and the only thing we can attribute it to is this logjam of parties from everyone who moved," she says.

"It's nothing we can control—there's no way we could have anticipated this," she says. "Everybody seemed to land on a Friday evening."

Experts say nonprofits were right to reschedule around the May 20-21 summit.

"The biggest hurdle would be getting guests there in a timely fashion," says Ann Marie Arzt, president of Eventscape Inc., a Barrington event-planning firm. "It takes an hour and a half to get downtown on a regular Saturday night."

Make-A-Wish Foundation Illinois, which holds its Wish Ball at UIC Forum at Roosevelt Road



LISA BERTAGNOLI

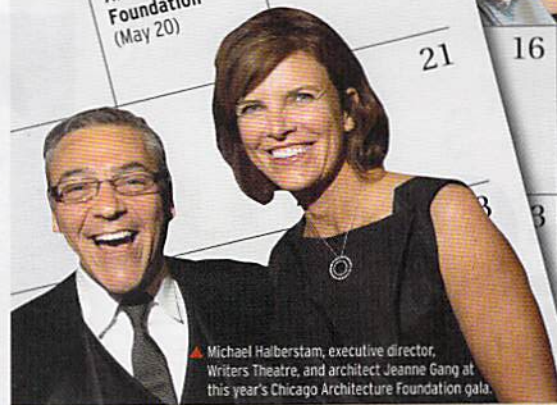
Social Whirl:

See slide shows of this and other events at:

ChicagoBusiness.com/society

MUSICAL GALAS

Worried about traffic and security issues associated with the NATO summit, several nonprofits moved their annual galas from the third weekend in May. Other organizations already were trying out new dates this month, resulting in a pileup of events on May 11-12 and very little the following weekend. (Last year's dates are in parentheses.)



▲ Michael Halberstam, executive director, Writers Theatre, and architect Jeanne Gang at this year's Chicago Architecture Foundation gala.

and Halsted Street, first decided to keep its third-weekend date. Then CEO Stephanie Springs began reading reports about security, traffic and other possible problems that threatened to disrupt movement downtown. "We said, 'We better get off that date,'" Ms. Springs recalls.

The ball was moved to May 12, another hot night with four oth-

er fundraisers taking place. Like the conservancy, Make-A-Wish felt the competition. Ms. Springs expected attendance of about 700, 100 fewer than last year.

Chicago Lighthouse for People Who Are Blind or Visually Impaired originally scheduled its gala for Thursday, then switched to May 24. "We had to scurry and change," says Janet Szlyk, presi-

dent and executive director.

The new schedule isn't perfect—that Thursday is the unofficial start to Memorial Day weekend—but Ms. Szlyk views it as an opportunity to test new dates for the gala, which usually grosses \$300,000. "It might work out for the best," she says.

Contact: society@crain.com