

Stanley Tucci to chair Two by Two benefit

Actor **Stanley Tucci** (*The Devil Wears Prada*) is a semi-regular at Dallas' annual Two By Two for AIDS and Art, a benefit for the Dallas Museum of Art and the American Foundation for AIDS Research. This year, he's agreed to serve as honorary chairman of the Oct. 23 black-tie auction. He'll also be recognized at the gala for his years of work on behalf of amfAR.

Just as in the past, next month's Two By Two will be held at the Preston Hollow estate of art collectors **Cindy and Howard Rachofsky**.

The following morning, artist **Christopher Wool** will receive the 2010 amfAR Award of Excellence for Artistic Contributions to the Fight Against AIDS.

In 11 years, Two by Two has raised more than \$25 million for amfAR and the DMA.



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Cardio with the stars

Saturday morning, members of the Equinox health club on Oak Lawn got an unexpected preview of the 11th season of *Dancing With the Stars*. Dutch-born ballroom dancing champion **Louis van Amstel** was there to teach a master class, a cardio workout inspired by ballroom dance.

Comedian **Margaret Cho** was among those who showed up to take the class. She and van Amstel will be partners in the new season of *DWTS*. Cho was in town to perform at the Verizon Theatre.

Lombardi in HPV

Veteran restaurateur **Alberto Lombardi** isn't satisfied with his Knox-Travis empire on the eastern border of Highland Park; he'll soon open up in the heart of the bubble.

Last week, he signed a lease on the former Robert Talbott space in Highland Park Village. That gives him 2,100 square feet near the central fountain courtyard where he'll be able to seat 45 people inside and 30 outside. The as-yet unnamed restaurant should open in March.

Alberto is also responsible for the massive renovations going on at the former Chip's hamburger joint at the corner of Armstrong and Cole. Late next month, he plans to open a Tuscan steakhouse there called La Fiorentina.

Fondue failure

Long before the new La Fiorentina space was Chip's, it was the Old Church, site of a disastrous restaurant concept. It's funny today because the two protagonists, **Phil Cobb** and **Gene Street**, later became rich with the Black-Eyed Pea and Dixie House restaurants.

In 1971, Phil and Gene opened the successful bar, J. Alfred's, in the building that now holds **Al Biernat's**. Feeling certain they had the Midas touch, they opened the Old Church to fill that missing void in the market: fondue cookery, with fondue pots at each table.

Alas, there was no craving for fondue and their losses nearly sank J. Alfred's, too.

"Fondue was my idea," Phil said years later, "and Gene never lets me forget it."