

Phat Friends: Reversing Traditional Roles

By Jack LiVolsi

“There’s nothing like that. NOTHING ... like THAT!” Spoken barely above a whisper, yet with the power to captivate an audience, Dr. Terence Candell expressed his joy in helping inner city youth “believe in themselves, so that they can feel proud, not only of where they are, but where they are going!” Those impassioned words captured the essence of what the 2nd Annual Phat Friends off the Hizzle Awards Dinner was all about – enriching the lives of young people.

Sponsored by the Bay Area Center for Independent Culture (BACIC), producer of the Bay Area All Stars Talent Show Network, the unique event reverses traditional roles and asks young people to become leaders by interviewing and nominating adults who are their unsung heroes. “For those of you fluent in hip hop,” 21 year old Master of Ceremonies Tony Bush, Jr. proclaimed, “a Phat Friend off the Hizzle is a really, REALLY good friend!” Thus honoring five “Phat Friends” who dedicated themselves to helping young people from the poorest neighborhoods reach their dreams. “This makes it ... much more special ... to know that it was one of my students who nominated me,” honoree Cenne Moore said. “We are all role models!” recipient Tarriona Norman reminded us.

“Whether it’s your kid or a kid in the street, somebody is watching you! ... And we need to be on top of our game, helping our kids grow up to be one of these wonderful young people you see on the stage.”

As fellow honorees Tara Landry and Orlando Cockerham took the stage, the profoundness of

Stars and a fabulous opportunity to develop our young people as civic leaders.”

One highlight of the evening was recognizing the generosity of the donors who gave over \$39,000 to benefit BACIC’s All Stars Talent Show Network. The youth development program was co-founded by Dr. Fred Newman who

believes “to create something new together ... we need to build it together, and youth have to be full partners in the building process.” As the evening came to a close Joyce Dattner, President and founder of BACIC, summed things up by saying, “In the diversity that is the Bay Area and America, the All Stars is a

continuously expanding coming together of people who don’t ordinarily come together. We’re a community building effort committed to the growth and development of our inner city youth. This is an important night for our young people, for the 2,000 Bay Area donors who have made tonight possible and for our growing partnership with the business and corporate community.”

To those of you fluent in hip hop, we say: There’s NOTHING like THAT... Fo Shizzle!

For more information about BACIC and the All Stars Talent Show Network, go to www.bacic.or



(Left to Right) Youth hosts Tony Bush, Jr., Hellen Li, Amani Barnes, and Eulanna Allen, BACIC President Joyce Dattner, BACIC Director of Youth Programs Dr. Elouise Joseph, youth hosts Latiisha Hester, Jolene Blessing, Malique Cooper and Luis Garcia.

the event was evident in their acceptance speeches – and in the “practice what we preach” nature of the occasion itself. The concept of creating something new by collaborating with young people was rewarded by the presence of youth hosts like 20 year old Amani Barnes who said, “This program has helped me transition from a child to an adult who can someday become a donor to the All Stars.” Eulanna Allen, 20, added “The last benefit dinner actually helped me get my first job. Through the training they gave me I was able to shine and get awarded for my work.” Dr. Elouise Joseph, Director of Youth Programs for BACIC said in thanking the honorees, “I find this to be a remarkable development in the growth of the Bay Area All