

A 16-PAGE PULLOUT SECTION

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Hate our list? Missing your favorite party people?
Nominate your top social stars for the 2006 XL Fortunate 500
at www.austin360.com/fortunate_500_nominations.



They're Austin's social warriors. You've seen them. Out there every night, making the rounds at every party. In the eye of the social storm, air-kissing and glad-handing. They're not just in the loop; they started it.

Call them what you will: patrons, sponsors, groupies or party animals. They're the movers and shakers of Austin's social scene. They do the "face time" at the events that make Austin hum. Politics, music, charity and a number of other coterries are their passions.

Some are wealthy, but not all. It's less about money and more about connections and, sometimes, influence — often for worthy causes. These people make a difference just by showing up.

Their motivations for hitting the social circuit differ. Some are natural philanthropists or humanitarians. Others are looking to boost their careers or businesses.

Some boys and girls just want to have fun. But they all share the same goal: to make Austin a better place by contributing to the city's social fabric.

So we decided to create a list honoring Austin's top 500 social stars.

Why? Because lists are fun. Who doesn't enjoy the guilty pleasure of People magazine's "Most Beautiful" list or Mr. Blackwell's "Worst Dressed"? But mostly, we wanted to recognize the social mechanics that makes Austin tick.

We call them the "XL Fortunate 500."

In the beginning, the task seemed daunting, as we sifted through list after list of partygoers generated from inside and outside the newsroom. But in no time, our roster exceeded 500, and we had to scale back.

It was a good problem to have — knowing too many worthy folks to choose from.

We struggled with the list's criteria. Naming the celebrities was easy, but "in-

fluential" or just "social" was trickier — more elusive.

Austin's social scene is a unique gumbo of talent, celebrity and backgrounds. Eccentrics and sophisticates. Heiresses rub elbows with slam poets. Power brokers swap jokes with penniless musicians. Politicians hang out with humble shopkeepers.

In Austin, jewels and jeans coexist seamlessly. It's a town where everyone knows everyone else, not everyone else's checkbook. Not that we don't like money. We do. But we try not to let it define us.

We pride ourselves on not being a Dallas or Houston, by not letting social stature take precedence. In Austin, we know what really matters. What's important. We're a tolerant, evolved town not hung up on social status.

But that doesn't mean we're not curious.

So here it is, the XL Fortunate 500. It's not a historical list, but one that highlights who we consider social standouts from the past year. They're in no particular order or ranking, although we've spotlighted a few leaders in their genre. Some fortunates are listed singly, others as couples, if they are known socially for going out in pairs. Some of those couples count as romantic life partners, others as frequent public companions (let's not use the old socialite term "walkers").

Naturally, some deserving folks have been omitted. Also, American-Statesman employees and contract workers and their immediate families were not eligible. It's not a perfect list, but we hope it's a good snapshot of Austin's most recognizable social people.

We hope to make this an annual issue, so if you didn't make this year's list, don't feel slighted. There's always next year. And besides, you live in Austin. And that makes us all fortunate.

the XL^{an} Fortunate 500

THE STARS OF AUSTIN'S SOCIAL UNIVERSE

BY KAREN ODOM SPEZIA



The all-stars

PEOPLE WHO MOVE IN MULTIPLE CIRCLES

MARY MARGARET FARABEE

arts/literary/charity/politics

Doing philanthropic work has its rewards — the satisfaction of helping others, the chance to collaborate with like-minded citizens, the pleasure of hard labor.

And then there are the fringe benefits.

Twenty years ago, when Mary Margaret Farabee organized an Austin screening of the Willie Nelson film "Red Headed Stranger" as a fund-raiser for KLRU, she got a special treat in the singer's tour bus, which was parked outside the Arboretum: "The fumes," she remembers, "I got high just walking around."

Most of the time, of course, Farabee just gets high from doing good. Born and raised in Dallas, Farabee came to Austin in 1957 to attend the University of Texas as a Plan II (honors) student and never left. Through the years she has immeasurably improved the city's civic life. Her first big project, begun in 1976, was the restoration of the Paramount Theatre, followed by the establishment of Philosopher's Rock

in Zilker Park. In addition to serving on the boards of numerous organizations, she is best known for her role in founding the Texas Book Festival, for which she served as chair for eight years.

Farabee no longer heads up the festival, but she more than keeps busy. As of last week she was working full-steam on three upcoming projects: a silent auction for the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, a fund-raiser for the People's Community Clinic and a Hometown Heroes event at the Paramount. A bit further in the future: organizing a citywide celebration of the Ransom Center's 50th anniversary in 2007 — which is, coincidentally, Farabee's 50th anniversary as an Austinite, as well.

And what sort of changes has Farabee seen over the course of her half century as a fixture in the Austin social scene? "Years ago there was what they call 'Old Austin,' but now when you look at the social scene it's so much more diverse than it was," she says. "There's times you go out and you think, 'Well, I don't know anybody here'; well, that's great! That's what's really exciting about Austin — there's so many new people giving us different perspectives."

— Jeff Salamon

More all-stars

Melanie and Ben Barnes

politics/business/
arts/charity

Ray Benson

music/arts/charity

Louis Black

media/film/music

Ann and Roy Butler

politics/business/
charity/heritage

Liz Carpenter

politics/charity/literary

Sara and Nick Fox

law/business/
high tech/arts

Kinky Friedman

literary/music/
politics/charity

Deborah Green

law/arts/charity

Ellen and Alfred King

arts/charity/education

Lowell Lebermann Jr.

business/education/
charity

Andrea and Dean McWilliams

politics/business/charity

Sherry Matthews and Dick Clark

business/media/politics/charity/arts/food

Mike Levy

media/charity/arts/politics

Teresa and Joe Long

arts/business/education/charity

Lynn and Tom Meredith

business/charity/politics

Willie Nelson

music/charity/movies

Turk Pipkin

movies/music/media/arts/politics

Sara and Dick Rathgeber

business/charity/politics

Ann Richards and Bud Shrake

politics/media/charity/business

Eddie Safady

business/arts/charity/politics

Eugene Sepulveda and Steven Tomlinson

education/arts/business/politics

Julia and Evan Smith

media/literary/arts/charity/politics

Carol Thompson

business/charity/politics

Julie and John Thornton

business/arts/charity

Bobbi and Mort Topfer

business/charity/arts

Eddie Wilson

food/music/business/arts/charity

Anne Elizabeth Wynn

arts/politics/charity

Will Wynn

politics/business/charity/arts