

Corporate Secretary

GOVERNANCE, RISK AND COMPLIANCE

Celebrating the end of proxy season

by [Aarti Maharaj](#) | June 20, 2012

Alan Miller, co-chairman of Innisfree, honored at exclusive governance event.

Finding a way to let off some steam after a long contentious annual meeting is often seen as a challenge in itself. Some governance officers and IROs usually head out of town or take some time out to recuperate. But for some, giving back to society is a good way to relieve stress and celebrate a successful annual meeting with colleagues. Fountain Gallery, a place that represents artists with mental illnesses, recently hosted its ninth End of the Annual Meeting Season Celebration, which was an event like no other.

Held at the offices of Ellen Philip Associates in Manhattan, the event featured a collage of original art pieces from artists who came from all walks of life. Among the art mediums represented in the exhibition were acrylic, oil and watercolor paintings, woodcuts and digital photographs. The money raised from the artworks and ticket sales were donated to the Fountain Gallery.

‘This event is a place where transfer agents, proxy solicitors, processors, governance professionals and IROs all gather after a grueling proxy season to enjoy art and the company of each other,’ says Carl Hagberg, chairman and CEO of Hagberg and Associates. ‘It’s more a celebration of a great industry because of the teamwork involved; the printer has to work with the lawyer who then tag teams with the IRO and other senior executives. And a number of these companies present at the event have provided work for the artists and other members of the gallery’s parent organization, Fountain House, through its Transitional Employment program.’

Hagberg, who is a member of Fountain Gallery’s advisory board and one of the event’s hosts adds that at the end of proxy season, there should be a healthy environment where professionals who were involved in the laborious process can convene to discuss matters for the next year.

Governance and investor relations professionals usually spend all year preparing for a company’s annual meeting. The process entails more than just setting an agenda and selecting the right speakers. It involves having sufficient information ready to bat away issues that may surface at any time.

But this year, annual meetings were a bit more treacherous. Protestors launched a string of confrontations at some of the country’s largest corporations that led to the adjournment of some meetings and the cancellation of others. It was a movement that many were not prepared for.

‘This year, we had a larger crowd at the event and it seems that it’s going to continue to grow because the annual meeting process isn’t the same,’ Hagberg notes.

Alan Miller, co-founder of proxy solicitation firm Innisfree, died last July and was honored at this year’s event for his active work in the corporate governance arena. Miller was instrumental in the world of M&A activity and is known for his involvement in a myriad of high-profile transactions.

Last year, the gallery honored David Smith, former president of the Society of Corporate Secretaries and Governance Professionals. Over the years, Smith has contributed significantly to corporate governance and securities regulations.

‘What made this event grow is that people in our industry are very hardworking and after dealing with investors, shareholder proposals, proxy voting, it is clear that professionals who are in this business are very focused and this display of art rang a bell with them that Fountain Gallery artists are similar in many aspects. Not only do they work on their art but they also help to operate the Gallery – and meaningful work is an important contributor to one’s well-being,’ Hagberg concludes.