

COCKTAILS FOR A GOOD CAUSE



Every month Bangkok's beautiful and successful meet at Bangkok's *Plaza Athénée* for "Cocktails & Cones" - a by now legendary smart-casual afterwork gathering for a good cause: A substantial part of the 450 baht entrance ticket goes to the *Lotus Flower Foundation* - a foundation helping severely abused and trafficked children in Thailand.

I recently enjoyed my first eve @ Cocktails & Cones - and let me tell you: It's not just the 4 free cocktails you get with the ticket - this time *Singapore Sling*, a truly smashing *Caipirinha* and others I've never heard of mixed by the Plaza's very own, terrifyingly talented bartenders. The served *tapas* as well are of utmost quality and finesse - but it's mainly the company you'll enjoy there.

Some people attending may have complained that the same time a total of 5 *uncancelable* other events were going on. But everybody seemed more than happy to have joined this other issue of Cocktails & Cones by making merit while sipping cocktails and nibbling on snacks. Drink and do good deeds. Where else you get such a deal.

Lotus Flower Foundation is a brainchild of blue-blooded Swiss-Thai Gabrielle von Reding de Biberegg. Every fiber of Gabrielle is in and behind the project named after the flower that is "one of the most ancient and deepest reaching symbols on the planet," Gabrielle's website says. "It grows in muddy water and rises above the surface to bloom with remarkable beauty. At night the flower closes and sinks underwater, at dawn it rises and opens again. Untouched by impurity, the lotus symbolizes the purity of heart and mind, and represents long life, health, honor and good luck."



Gabrielle has some heavy names behind her foundation - only to name the **Plaza** and Fred Mouawad, founder, the brain behind **GFA**, creator of franchises such as *Coffee World*, *Cream & Fudge*, *New York Deli* and others.

The projects of Gabrielle - "I'm a philanthropist," she says - adhere to the **Montessori schooling method**. Current major project is the Rehabilitation Center in Nonthaburi with completion scheduled for early '09.

The center will receive severely abused children for shelter in a collaboration with hospitals, the Thai police, the Thai social welfare department and various other shelters.

The majority of children Lotus Flower Foundation takes care of were either trafficked or physically or sexually abused. Says Gabrielle: "A sexually abused child is destroyed, the pain runs so deep - but we help."

Plans are to soon open more rehab centers at various locations in Thailand, Burma, Laos and Cambodia.

Beside the monthly Cocktails & Cones to collect money for the foundation every second there's a raffle sponsored by highly regarded brands such as **BMW**, **Six Senses**, **Dream Hotel**, **Four Seasons**, **Chiva-Som**, **Jim Thompson**, **Mövenpick Ice Cream** and others, each donating prizes or sponsoring food.

They do their part. Now do yours.

Energetic Gabrielle and her Cocktails & Cones make this a no-brainer, don't they. Perfect, by the way, for networking.

Or you in your ivory tower, still hesitating?

Here's Gabrielle:

"In my eyes, child abuse, prostitution, child pornography and trafficking have cast the darkest of shadows over Thailand.

UNICEF estimates that approximately 250,000 children become victims of sex trade each year in Thailand alone.

These severely abused children are often left with so little hope that traditional shelters can not begin to address their immense traumas or give them the deserved special care so necessary in their long-term healing process.

Physically and sexual abused children very often go on to display abusive behavior themselves as part of a vicious yet predictable cycle of imbalance leading to further disparity with their mind, body and spirit.

Up to 80% of children who are victims of domestic violence become orphaned as returning to their families becomes increasingly unsafe.

Abused children are also at a much higher risk of becoming casualties of drug, alcohol and sexual addictions, feeding continuous patterns of victimization."

+++ Cocktails & Cones is on invitation only. For details <mailto:fb.bangkok@lemeridien.com>