



PARKER: Convention gives philanthropist foot in the door to help homeless

By Penny Parker

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Joe Hodas, the former Frontier Airlines mouthpiece who left the shaky airline biz for firmer ground at Consumer Capital Partners, is expending his energy on his company's philanthropic efforts during the Democratic National Convention.

The Denver-based investment firm founded by former Quiznos CEO Rick Schaden is putting 20,000 T-shirts on the backs of locals and visitors with the America's Road Home message and a 1-800 number printed on the back. The charity is part of CCP's corporate mission to end homelessness.

But the big DNC to-do is a multi-media outdoor party with Mayor John Hickenlooper and emcee CBS 4's Molly Hughes from 6:30 to 9:45 p.m. Aug. 22 in the church parking lot on Grant Street between East 13th and 14th avenues - ironically a half-block from the first Quiznos store.

The mix-mingle-and-munch event will feature the debut of artist Krzysztof Wodiczko's projection piece about homeless veterans that will be shown at dusk Aug. 25-28 on the wall of the vacant Aromor building at 13th and Grant as part of Dialog:City, an event that will showcase the work of 10 artists throughout Denver neighborhoods.

Schaden's company partnered with Mercy Housing, a company that helps low-income people, and bought the building to redevelop it as "transitional housing" for the homeless.

Proceeds from donations at the VIP party (for sponsorship information, contact Hodas at jhodas@consumercp.com or 303-592-3849) will go to Denver's Road Home, one of Hickenlooper's pet projects. There will be a presentation by the mayor as well as the artist himself.

The cocktail party, catered by Oceanaire Seafood Room, will be followed by the presentations

and then the crowd (they're hoping for 300 attendees) will move into a tent for a catered dinner by Baur's Ristorante with Wodiczko's piece as the final act.

DOUBLE DUTY: In addition to Willie Nelson's concert that's open to the public at Red Rocks on Aug. 26, the country crooner has been tapped to entertain roughly 2,000 invited guests of engineering and construction giant CH2M Hill during a DNC bash Aug. 25.

The Douglas County-based global company is holding a Sustainability Expo that day with a welcome reception featuring local vocal Hazel Miller from 3 to 6 p.m. in the south parking lot of Invesco Field at Mile High. In the evening, Nelson takes over.

"Willie's really committed to the principles of sustainability," said CH2M Hill spokesman John Corsi. "We thought there was a good connection there and he's playing Red Rocks the next night."

EAGLES WON'T FLY: It's the rumor that just won't die - that the Eagles are going to play the DNC. They're not, never were. The band has long been booked in Milwaukee and Chicago during convention week. So give it up.

MUZZLED: Some of my loyal spies are volunteers for the Democratic National Convention.

During Tuesday's training for drivers who will be shuttling politicians and VIPs, the head of transportation for the event laid down the law. No. 1 rule? Don't speak to the media. How many folks called to tell me that? Plenty.

Also during that meeting, one volunteer asked what DNC drivers should do if passengers want to be dropped off at the Diamond Cabaret or Shotgun Willie's. "Should we take them?" my spy asked.

The answer: "No, we don't want any DNC cars parking in front of the Diamond Cabaret or any other strip joint." (Again, because the pesky media might follow the official cars.)

Volunteer: "What do we do if they want to go there?"

Answer: "You drop them off a block from the joint and make them walk."

BUCKHORN BUZZ: It only makes sense that the historic Buckhorn Exchange would be the site for hearty parties during the DNC. Here's what the animal heads on the walls told me:

* Western crooners Bill Barwick and Roz Brown are brushing up on Merle Haggard's *Okie From Muskogee* in preparation for an Aug. 23 private party at the Buckhorn Exchange for Oklahoma Congressman Dan Boren, who is from Muskogee, representing Oklahoma's eastern plains

since 2004.

* The Buckhorn is serving dinner every night until midnight, hoping for post-convention late-night dining.

* The Buckhorn also is stocking up on Rocky Mountain Oysters, which yes, are deep-fried. But in keeping with the DNC push for healthier foods, chefs are working on an alternative way to cook our claim-to-fame food.

SENSATIONAL CINCOTTI: Friday night's Peter Cincotti concert at the Ellie Caulkins Opera House, a benefit for Concerts for Kids, was the performance of a kid (he's a mere 25) with a gift. His fingers flew across the piano keys and his voice soared through the beautiful building.

It was a first for the Ellie because high-paying guests were allowed to sit behind the band on stage. Other VIPs pulled up to cocktail tables in the front rows. It was a different twist on a charity event that Denver sorely needed. Keep an eye on this burgeoning piano man.

THE SEEN: Judi and Bob Newman (their names grace the Newman Center at DU) celebrating their 40th wedding anniversary over dinner at Del Frisco's on Tuesday. The real anniversary date is Sunday, but Bob gave Judi her present early: a stunning gold necklace studded with diamonds and rubies.

EAVESDROPPING on a woman talking to a man with a foreign accent at Spitfire Grill in Lowry: "How long have you lived in the United States?"

"Two years."

"Have you ever had sex in the United States?"

"If flying 30,000 feet above it counts, then yes."

Penny Parker's column appears Tuesday through Saturday. Listen to her on the Caplis and Silverman radio show between 4 and 5 p.m. Fridays on KHOW-AM (630). Call her at 303-954-5224 or e-mail parkerp@RockyMountainNews.com.

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