

# TAKING NAMES



SHIA KAPOS

## ART, AIDS & 'ACTIVISM'

**F**red Eychaner doesn't make little plans. He has built a gallery adjacent to his Lincoln Park offices to showcase a groundbreaking exhibition about AIDS.

Art AIDS America Chicago opens Dec. 1 for a four-month run in a former bank building that Eychaner owns on the corner of Fullerton and Halsted.

"Bringing Art AIDS America to Chicago is exactly the sort of activism our country needs so badly right now. This is the core of Alphawood Foundation's purpose," he said in an emailed statement that hinted at his thoughts about the presidential election. He was a major donor to Hillary Clinton's bid. Alphawood is his philanthropic foundation.

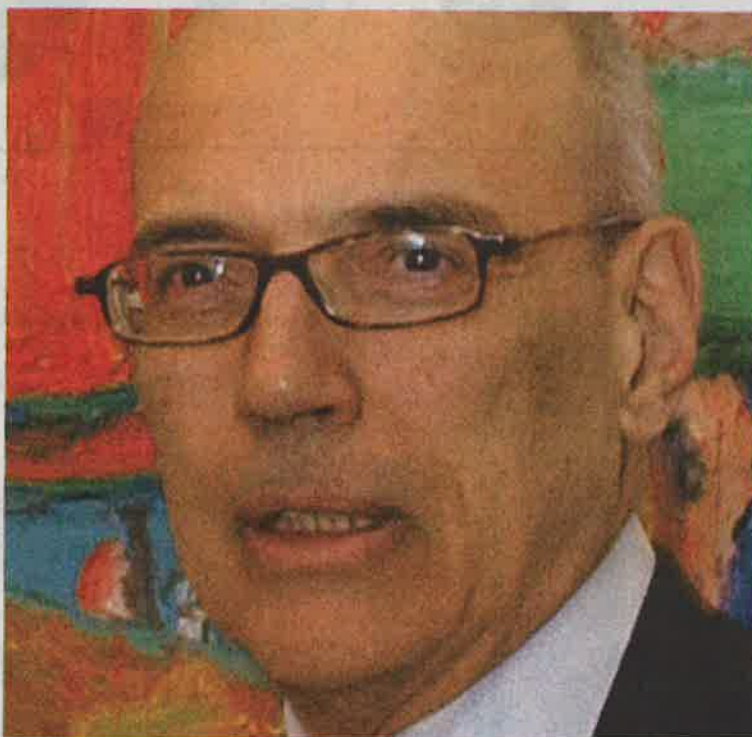
The Chicago businessman came to fund the show after talking to his friend Jonathan Katz, an arts historian and co-curator of the AIDS exhibit. Katz was having difficulty finding a museum to host the show.

"I mentioned that I was so disappointed that Chicago, a city I have always thought of as home [I lived here 10 years], could not find a place for Art AIDS America," Katz told me. "Fred popped up with 'OK, we'll do it.' I thought at first he was joking, but in short order it was clear he was not. He was undaunted by the checklist — find a building, convert it to meet museum standards, hire a director, etc. He just did it. It was breathtaking. Yes, I was stunned."

The show has already appeared in Tacoma, Washington; Atlanta, and the Bronx, where it attracted raves and rhetoric from both sides of the political aisle. A few pieces interpreted as being too graphic were omitted from those exhibitions, which were held at traditional museums.

Under the Alphawood umbrella, the Chicago show will appear in its entirety and with additional works by Chicago artists.

Eychaner is founder of Newsweb



Businessman Fred Eychaner built a gallery in a former bank building in Lincoln Park to showcase an art exhibition about AIDS. | AP FILES

Corp., a publisher of small newspapers, and he's launched TV and radio stations. WPWR-TV Channel 50 was sold in 2002 to Fox Television for a reported \$425 million.

His foundation is the sole funder of the AIDS show, though dozens of Chicago businesses have partnered to promote it. "We've told them 'Bring your boards here. Bring your donors. Bring your members.' We want people to see it," says Jim McDonough, executive director for Alphawood Foundation.

The exhibition takes viewers back to the 1980s, when then-President Ronald Reagan refused to say the word "AIDS." Art pieces run the gamut in addressing political, medical and spiritual issues. You'll leave wondering what might have been as

so many of the artists featured died too young, victims of AIDS.

There are pieces from notable artists, including Robert Mapplethorpe, Keith Haring and Annie Leibovitz. And a dramatic oil on canvas by the late Roger Brown is a Chicago story. "Peach Light" features a skeleton illuminated by an orange halo. The artwork represents a gay bar in Chicago that replaced normal lighting with peach lights — it was more flattering to customers ravaged by the disease, explains Anthony Hirschel, director of exhibitions of the foundation. "It made them feel more whole and alive."

### Mayor shows his soft side

Mayor Rahm Emanuel showed a crack in his tough-guy image Tuesday



Megyn Kelly | FILE PHOTO

morning at a breakfast highlighting the work of Special Olympics, founded in Chicago nearly 50 years ago.

In a speech woven with humor and empathy, Emanuel drew laughs mentioning his rabbi was worried about the Jewish mayor's religious allegiance. Emanuel was referring to a recent trip to the Vatican.

But it was Emanuel's comments about his family that hit home with the crowd.

The mayor said he was especially sensitive to the work of Special Olympics because his sister has lived with "a physical disability."

Emanuel has famously talked about his brothers — oncologist Zeke Emanuel and talent agent Ari Emanuel — but he doesn't talk about his adopted sister, Shoshanna.

After his speech at Maggiano's Banquets, I asked Emanuel to elaborate, and he declined, saying he doesn't like to talk about family.

A New York Times story described the physical challenges Shoshanna faced growing up, including four operations and years of physical therapy to give her "85 percent use of her left side."

Emanuel's comments had an impact on the crowd, says City Club President Jay Doherty. "He can come across as a tough guy sometimes, but he has a soft side."

Emanuel's speech drew more than 350 attendees to the event and executives from a few companies in attendance wrote checks for \$5,000 to support Special Olympics Chicago.

The event included happy birthday wishes to Emanuel — he's 57 — and a request from Illinois Supreme Court Justice Anne Burke. She's a founder of Special Olympics and asked the mayor to add a star to the Chicago flag "to emphasize the role of Chicago" in starting the international games.

### Megyn Kelly dishes about Chicago

Fox News anchor Megyn Kelly chit-chatted about Chicago with business executives at a party hosted by Dan Goodwin, chairman of Inland Real Estate Group.

Kelly sat with Ron Gidwitz, a fundraiser for Donald Trump; investor and philanthropist Muneer Satter;

Bill Kunkler, executive vice president of the Crown family's CC Industries; and Todd Ricketts, the Cubs co-owner who says he's "honored" to be considered for a position in Trump's Cabinet.

On stage at the Westin Hotel in Lombard, Kelly talked about living in Chicago.

Before battling Trump on the air, she was a litigator at the Jones Day law firm in the city. Kelly said she has fond memories of guitar lessons at Old Town School of Folk Music and living in Roscoe Village. But the work wasn't fulfilling.

An episode of "Dr. Phil" hit home. "He said, 'The only difference between you and someone you envy is that you settled for less.'"

A career change followed, and now comes Kelly's book: "Settle for More."

Shia Kapos' Taking Names appears Monday and Wednesday. Read more at shiakapos.com.



Mayor Emanuel