

25A COVER

A Glamorous Philanthropist

By Bobbie Catala
Photos By Benno Klandt





It is with great humility and elegance that Jean Shafiroff has earned her place in the world of philanthropy. A philanthropist is a person who seeks to promote the welfare of others, especially by the generous donation of money to good causes. Over the past two decades the practice of philanthropy has advanced considerably. The role of women in philanthropy has become a hot topic. Women have become a powerful force, focused on giving back, not on selfishness. Jean's generosity, earnest dedication, and compassion, along with outstanding managerial skills define her as a stellar volunteer fundraiser and leader of several charitable causes.

Raised on Long Island, Jean was instilled at an early age by her family to always care for those in need. After graduating from Holy Trinity High School in Hicksville, Jean went on to earn a Bachelor of Science degree in Physical Therapy from Columbia University's College of Physicians and Surgeons, and an MBA from Columbia's Graduate School of Business. Shafiroff then worked as a Physical Therapist at St. Lukes Hospital in New York City. She later worked in public finance and in private partnerships on Wall Street, including a post in the private placement department of investment bank L.F. Rothschild, Unterberg, Towbin.

After marrying Martin D. Shafiroff, Managing Director at Barclays, and starting a family, Jean spent much of her time caring for her two daughters, Jacqueline and Elizabeth. While her daughters were young, Jean was active at their schools, giving her time as class mother and grade representative, as well as volunteering for a few charities. When her daughters went off to college, Jean, having more time, became actively involved in philanthropy.

Jean's desire for compassion and treating others with kindness, dignity and respect led her to devote herself to giving. She lives the role of a philanthropic leader. Jean possesses the remarkable ability to connect different charitable groups with interesting people and resources. Her work reminds us of our connection to one another, and the importance of caring. Jean wears many hats as a board member, chairwoman, underwriter, and hostess of many charitable events. The charities where she serves on the board include New York Women's Foundation, JBFCS, New York City Mission Society, The French Heritage Society, The Couture Council, which supports the museum at The Fashion Institute of Technology, The Lighthouse International Advisory Board, Southampton Bath and Tennis Club Charitable Foundation and Southampton Animal Shelter. Jean chaired the Southampton Hospital Annual Summer Gala in 2010, 2011 and 2013 raising \$1.7 million, \$2 million and \$1.75 million respectively, proving this dynamic organizer gets results.

Jean has encouraged her daughters to realize the importance of philanthropy. Sharing the passion with her daughters Elizabeth and Jackie, Jean has become involved in animal rescue. Her work with Southampton Animal Shelter has raised millions over the last four years for the no kill shelter. Last year's James Bond themed gala that she chaired, honoring Georgina Bloomberg brought out over 300 guests including Mayor Michael Bloomberg, and Southampton Mayor Mark Epley. The annual "Unconditional Love Gala" supports the adoption of many adorable cats and dogs, as well as caring for over 1200 homeless animals a year. The shelter presently has about 30 pit bulls as this breed remains the longest because they are the hardest to find homes for. The Shafiroff's are great supporters of animal welfare and have two pit bulls, Daisy and Bella. They have fostered many dogs, and have even rescued dogs while on vacation. They brought a dog back from Panama City, who was later adopted by the musician Sting's daughter Mickey.

This soft-spoken and eloquent woman has outstanding skills when it comes to fundraising. With most of the funding being individual, Jean does not take "no" personally and realizes that a rejection today could be a yes tomorrow. Her chief task is reaching out to people, bringing in funds by selling tables for the events, using diplomacy to persuade for the cause of giving. An enormous amount of work is involved, as an event can take 10 or 11 months to plan. A table at one of the galas can cost anywhere from \$10,000 to \$100,000. Jean not only fundraises, but is an advocate and encourages others to get involved in whatever ways they can. She gives a great deal of time as well as available resources of her own, serving as a leader, but is a believer in the team approach.

During our conversation Jean shared with me her devotion to charitable causes. Through her travels, which have included Cambodia, China, Jordan, Columbia, and Haiti, she has witnessed enormous suffering and inequalities among people. Jean cares deeply about those less fortunate than herself, and feels everyone should be able to lead a good life, with the opportunity to receive a good education and move forward. Making their home in New York City and Southampton, her husband and two daughters are also dedicated to serving their community.

Jean considers herself blessed, and is proud of her Long Island heritage. She celebrates our beautiful beaches, summer greenery, great restaurants, hospitals, good police and fire department, and great people committed to our country. Also loving New York City, she enjoys the diversity, along with the people and opportunities. Jean appreciates the

goodness of people and their work toward good means to make our country strong. Jean continues to dazzle as she attends the numerous galas and events.

I had to ask about her fabulous style! Some of her favorite designers are Carolina Herrera, Oscar de la Renta, B. Michael, and Zang Toi, a Malaysian designer she works directly with. Possessing the ability to make things work together, Jean will put together a Chanel bag with a dress from H&M and look fabulous. She does save her magnificent gowns and will re-wear them to later events. Oscar de la Renta Co. recently asked Jean to borrow one of her pieces for an exhibit in San

Francisco. Jean has been profiled on the Chic Index as a fashionable New Yorker, and featured in *Hamptons Magazine* best dressed list.



When she does donate her clothing Jean is careful to make sure it goes to a good place, and is a giver to Lighthouse Guild. Jean feels dressing elegantly is part of being a woman, and she certainly does it well. Keeping fit and maintaining a healthy lifestyle is important to Jean. This lovely lady somehow finds the time to exercise numerous times a week. She enjoys classes as opposed to a personal trainer. She watches her diet and eats chicken or fish...no red meat. Plenty of salads and fresh local fruits and vegetables help Jean keep herself in such fabulous shape. Jean's compassion and dedication is inspiring.

Jean told me she believes if we have the ability to do something good we should. She is concerned deeply about the big divide, and the shrinking middle class. The numbers are staggering, with 30% of New York City children living below the poverty level. Women around the world are not always considered equal to men, nor given the educational opportunities they are entitled to. Having traveled the world, she has seen the injustices, and feels the greatest achievement is to see the results from the work done. Jean admits that it is not always easy, but loves the volunteer work she performs. This notable philanthropist feels her work gives meaning to her life, and encourages others to become involved with well run charities that are responsible. Her assistance and dedication has helped to raise millions of dollars. To date, Jean has been honored by several organizations including by the New York City Mission Society who gave her their Dina Merrill Award for Public Service. Her hands on involvement with the multiple causes she supports is indisputable. Jean Shafiroff is a remarkable woman with a mission for caring and a strong sense of giving back, along with the great virtue of being a hard working, responsible, compassionate human being.

*CREDITS: Hair: Stephanie Flor for Angelo David Salon | HairArt | Makeup: Jennifer Martin for Angelo David Salon | Bobbi Brown Cosmetics
DRESS CREDITS Cover - Orange gown with hot pink embroidery - Oscar de la Renta Inside Orange gown with hot pink embroidery- Oscar de la Renta (same gown as cover) Strapless pale pink feather cocktail dress- Oscar de la Renta Black silk gown with sequined embroidery- Zang Toi Striped satin cocktail dress - B. Michael*



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