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Black Tie Dinner PR

## **35<sup>th</sup> Annual Black Tie Dinner Raises the Bar at Sold Out Dinner**

**October 3, 2016 (DALLAS)** – On Saturday evening, Black Tie Dinner – the nation’s largest LGBT fundraising dinner – welcomed more than 2,500 guests for a spectacular evening of empowerment, education and entertainment. Since the first dinner in 1982, the all-volunteer organization has raised more than \$20 million dollars in funding to local and national community support organizations.

This year’s dinner was co-chaired by Mitzi Lemons and Nathan Robbins, who, along with the entire Black Tie Dinner Board and hundreds of volunteers, worked for a full year creating and producing the annual fundraiser which has become one of the most anticipated and attended events of the year.

The program opened with the presentation of the annual Kuchling Humanitarian Award to Dr. Steven Pounders for his positive impact on Dallas’ LGBT community. During his acceptance speech, Dr. Pounders recalled the devastating impact of HIV/AIDS as it began ravaging communities across the nation and how he was among a handful of doctors who were willing to help those affected by the disease.

Following Pounders’ award, hotelier Liz Lambert presented the Ally for Equality Award to Emmy nominated actress and UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) Goodwill Ambassador Connie Britton. In her remarks, Britton affirmed her commitment to fighting for equality for the LGBTQ community so that her young son can live in a world where equality is the norm.

Comedienne Dana Goldberg entertained as the returning host of Black Tie Dinner’s Luxury Auction – using her trademark comedy and auctioneering skills to raise over \$100,000 in the room.

Multi-talented entertainer and Texas native Todrick Hall performed two musical numbers, including an emotional song he wrote in response to the tragedy at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando. For the latter performance, Hall was joined on stage by singer Vonzel Solomon for a moving duet.

During his speech, Human Rights Campaign President Chad Griffin highlighted the importance of this year’s presidential election and emphasized how our votes are crucial to ensuring that we remain on a path toward full equality in the United States.

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Upon receiving the Elizabeth Birch Award, Olympic Gold medalist and LGBT activist Greg Louganis shared with the audience how much progress has been made since he came out and revealed that he had been living with HIV decades ago. He also shared a moving message that he wrote to his 16-year-old self about the progress he would see in his lifetime and the pride he has for his younger self. He also announced that Dallas will apply to host the 2022 Gay Games.

Actress Debra Messing was presented with Black Tie Dinner's annual Media Award, which is presented to an individual or industry leader who has demonstrated a solid commitment to bringing public and media attention to major LGBT issues. During her acceptance speech, Messing recalled the impact that HIV/AIDS had on her as a young college student at NYU and how her time on the hit show *Will & Grace* positively impacted our culture and the progress we've made toward equality.

The dinner closed with an incredible performance by multi-platinum recording artist and actress Deborah Cox. As a prelude to her starring in *The Bodyguard* musical, which will run at Dallas Summer Musicals and Bass Performance Hall in the summer of 2017, Cox channeled Whitney Houston by singing two of the late star's hit songs from the record-breaking soundtrack of *The Bodyguard* film.

This year's After Black Party, presented by John Wright Martin Building + Interiors, was held in the Sheraton's Lone Star Ballroom Preconvene, where Cox took the stage once again to perform her hit song *Nobody's Supposed to Be Here*.

The proceeds raised from Saturday's event will be distributed on November 10<sup>th</sup>, at the Fairmont Dallas in the newly renovated Venetian Room. For additional information about the Dinner, visit [blacktie.org](http://blacktie.org).

### **About Black Tie Dinner**

Black Tie Dinner is a non-profit organization that raises funds for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) supportive organizations serving North Texas through a premier event of empowerment, education and entertainment that has grown into the nation's largest LGBT fundraising dinner since its inception in 1982. The first dinner produced a \$6,000 donation to the Human Rights Campaign Foundation, and has since raised over \$20 million for national and local beneficiaries. Black Tie Dinner continues to be the most successful dinner in the country supporting the Human Rights Campaign Foundation, and has the distinction of being the only dinner also benefiting local beneficiaries.

The event has headlined local and national celebrities and leaders such as Marlee Matlin, Maya Angelou, Geena Davis, Lily Tomlin, Martin Sheen, Gavin Newsom, Congresswoman Tammy Baldwin and Oscar-winning screenwriter Dustin Lance Black. In addition to live entertainment and a keynote address, Black Tie Dinner honors outstanding service to the LGBT community with the Elizabeth Birch Equality Award, the Black Tie Dinner Media Award and the Kuchling Humanitarian Award. Recipients have included Elizabeth Birch, Sharon Stone, Judy Shepard, Alan Cumming, Showtime

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Networks/Robert Greenblatt, Bishop V. Gene Robinson, Cyndi Lauper, Logo  
Network/Brian Graden, Chely Wright, American Airlines, Chaz Bono, JCPenney and  
Scouting For All founder Zach Wahl.

For more information about Black Tie Dinner or this year's event, visit [blacktie.org](http://blacktie.org) or  
call 972-865-2239, ext. 29.

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