



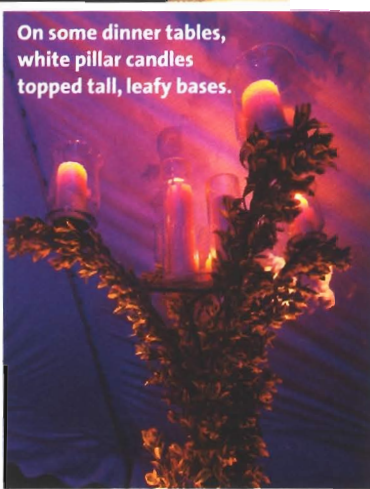
After dinner, the Ken Arlen Orchestra performed against a prairie backdrop.



Old photos of the zoo adorned the base of the cocktail tent's 40-foot bar.



White furniture formed lounge groupings in the cocktail tent.



On some dinner tables, white pillar candles topped tall, leafy bases.



Oh What a Night, a Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons tribute group, sang with the Ken Arlen Orchestra.

Tent City

When tenting Lincoln Park Zoo grounds for a fund-raiser, planners took weather and emergency vehicles into account.

CHICAGO On July 10, the carousel at the Lincoln Park Zoo had more sophisticated passengers than usual as guests at the black-tie Zoo Ball took cocktail-hour rides in tuxes and animal-print gowns. With the theme "Spots and Stripes Forever," the fund-raising dinner dance for 750 guests "really focused on the animals," said Erin Dahl, the zoo's manager of donor events.

With the help of designers from Heffernan Morgan, the evening's cocktail tent became what Dahl referred to as a "zoo hall of fame." Banners hanging from the tent's roof depicted some of the zoo's occupants; and a custom 40-foot bar incorporated illuminated photos of zoo grounds. In the dinner tent, Frost's paw-print gobos formed a path down the all-white dance floor, and projections of frogs, zebras, and other zoo animals illuminated the top of the tent.

Setting up the gala on the open-to-the-public zoo grounds put the planning team on a tight schedule. The tents went up on July 5. Hall's, Limelight Catering, and other vendors came in for "the big rental delivery" on July 9, Dahl said. Though the vendors were able to get most everything in place on that night, the law required a path through the tent for emergency vehicles. When the zoo closed at 3:30 on gala day, the vendors and planning crew began what Dahl referred to as a "mad dash," working until the event's 6:30 start-time to fill the walkway with tables and other rentals.

Dahl said that the summer's unusually rainy weather posed a logistical challenge. "We've had our eyes peeled on the weather like crazy." Ultimately, the planning team arranged for HDO rain tents to cover the main registration area, which sat just inside zoo gates; they also rented marquee tents to cover the open-air stretch between the registration area and the gala's curbside drop-off point. And though the skies remained clear, "it's better to be safe than sorry, in a year when the weather's been so unpredictable," Dahl said. —Jenny Berg

Lincoln Park Zoo's Zoo Ball

Audiovisual Production Frost
Catering Limelight Catering
Decor, Flowers Heffernan Morgan
Entertainment Arlen Music Consultants Inc.
Invitations, Printing Arena Design Inc.
Rentals Windy City Linen, Hall's Rental, BBI Linen—Chicago
Tenting HDO Tenting
Venue Lincoln Park Zoo