



Salem Chamber rolls out the orange carpet

By Tom Dalton
Staff writer

SALEM — The Peabody Essex Museum was aglow in orange last night for "Celebrate Salem," the Salem Chamber of Commerce's annual awards dinner.

The tulips on the dinner tables were orange, the drapes in the atrium were orange, and even the tie worn by Chamber Executive Director Rinus Oosthoek was orange.

Orange was the color of the evening because the PEM, which was the venue for the gathering of more than 265 business leaders, is preparing to open a new exhibit, "The Golden Age of Dutch Seascapes." (Orange, in case you didn't know, is the national color of the Netherlands.)

There was even a pair of wooden shoes on display, a bottle of Ketel One vodka from the Netherlands and a menu offering a hoofdgerecht (the Dutch word for "entree") of North Sea cod with pumpkin seed crust.

"This is the one and only time I can admit to being Dutch," said Oosthoek, a native of the Netherlands. And today, he noted, is Queen's Day, a national holiday in his native land.

However, not everything or everyone admitted to being Dutch last night.

Jerry Arcari, the president of Landry & Arcari, wore an orange suede sports coat that stood out in the crowd, but it was by accident.

"I'm Italian," he said.

And although rumors were swirling that the tall, blond woman at the raffle wheel was from Holland, she was not.

"I'm Swedish," said Malin Sohr, a senior at Salem State College and intern for Salem Main Streets, a downtown business program.

Considering the state of the economy and the \$85 ticket price, it was an impressive turnout, with members of the business community almost wall to wall.

"Misery loves company," joked George Carey, the owner of Finz restaurant. "It's also a statement of the organization. The Chamber does a great

job."

They also came to pay tribute to the business and community leaders being honored.

Awards for businessman and businesswoman of the year went to Matt Picarsic, a principal of RCG, and Wendi Goldsmith, founder of The Bioengineering Group.

Two years ago, Goldsmith's firm landed a multimillion-dollar contract to help rebuild New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina. Coincidentally, she is teamed with a Dutch engineering firm on the project.

Picarsic's firm, meanwhile, has been busy rebuilding Salem. RCG converted the former Salem Laundry building into Derby Lofts condominiums, purchased the Peabody Block and other downtown properties, and is finishing up the retail and residential redevelopment of the former Salem Evening News site. The Somerville developer is so active here that it opened a downtown Salem office.

A3D (African Development Through Drum and Dance) won the community service award for its involvement with local schools and other causes, for starting the Salem CultureFest and for its charitable work in Africa. A3D is headed by Donald Goldman, Debra Crosby and Mamadou Diop.

Ann Massey of Rouge Cosmetics won the excellence in retail award; Jim Crosby, the owner of Crosby's Marketplace, received the long-term achievement award; and Sixty2 on Wharf, a restaurant launched by chef Tony Bettencourt, was named new business of the year.