

# 'And I like large parties'

Jordan Baker, in F. Scott Fitzgerald's "The Great Gatsby"



JOY KIMBROUGH | THE DAILY TIMES

**BLOUNT COUNTY REGISTER OF Deeds Phyllis Crisp** checks out a silent auction item at the Habitat for Humanity New Year's Eve Gatsby Gala.

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From Staff Reports

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**DOUG AND JOAN JENKINS** play a little roulette during the New Year's Eve Gatsby Gala to benefit Habitat for Humanity Sunday evening at the Royal Oaks Event Center.



**JEANNE DUNCAN TAKES A** photo of Robbie Phillips and Mike Houston during the Blount County Habitat for Humanity's New Year's Eve Gatsby Gala at the Royal Oaks event center.

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On New Year's Eve it was frigid outside, but the joint was jumping inside the Royal Oaks Event Center where The Roaring '20s were en vogue.

Blount County Habitat for Humanity held its inaugural Gatsby Gala fundraiser Sunday night to celebrate its 25th anniversary. It turned out to be the cat's meow for this organization dedicated to eliminating poverty housing and homelessness by providing affordable and stable housing for Blount Countians in need.

It can be called inaugural now because this first effort proved such a success. Executive Director Kathy Jackson said the Development Committee had for years been searching for a signature fundraising event to support the local Habitat group.

They wanted something special, something that didn't interfere with or duplicate other fundraisers. What they didn't know was how well it would go over. They found out.

"For a first-time event it could not have gone any

better," Jackson said.

The gala drew about 170 people at \$75 per ticket, with \$100 for the VIP bourbon reception "speakeasy" that was held before the main event.

New Year's Eve celebrants entered into the world of 1920s opulence from the moment they arrived. The gala included live, hot-era jazz, cold drinks, gourmet hors d'oeuvres, photo booth, swanky live auction, a champagne toast and fireworks display to ring in the New Year. Belle Meade Distillery of Nashville handled the bourbon tasting.

It was quite a change of pace for a group more accustomed to wearing tool belts and work gloves.

"There were the lady's with their dresses and their frills. It definitely was a fun affair," Jackson said.

The gala couldn't have been possible without lead sponsor Russell & Abbott Heating and Cooling as well as the marketing by Dedicated Marketing, according to Jackson.

Expect more to come.

"We've decided to go ahead and do it again next year," Jackson said.

## THE DAILY TIMES

Blount County's only daily newspaper,  
serving our readers  
since 1883.

### Subscriptions: 981-1160

Paid-in-advance 7-day print delivery.  
Includes E-edition subscription.  
Monthly (via auto draft): \$13  
13 weeks: \$47  
26 weeks: \$87  
52 weeks: \$164

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