



The Bronx Chamber of Commerce held its 21st annual gala

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Bronx, NY Anything is Possible was the theme as The Bronx Chamber of Commerce held its 21st Annual Gala at Marina del Rey in the Throggs Neck section of the borough. The 2024 Gala showcased the advancements made possible for commerce in the Bronx and beyond by artificial intelligence, featuring SOPHIA, an AI-powered humanoid Master of Ceremonies created by Hanson Robotics. Bronx-based developers Simone Development Companies and Stagg Group served as AI sponsors for the event.

“The Bronx Chamber is thrilled to be the first association to feature the one-of-a-kind SOPHIA and provide an experience for the Chamber network to experience her vast capabilities, demystifying AI and demonstrating its potential to fuel the growth of our business community,” said Lisa Sorin, president of the Bronx Chamber of Commerce. “More than 600 members, partners and supporters gathered together to recognize the contributions of our honorees with an eye toward the future of commerce in our borough and beyond.”

SOPHIA, a humanoid robot that served as emcee for the event, was developed by scientists at Hanson Robotics with a persona “combining cutting- edge work in symbolic AI, neural networks, expert systems, machine perception, conversational natural language processing, adaptive motor control and cognitive architecture.” She is able to recognize human faces, see emotional expressions, and express her own human-like emotional responses. She can generate her own ideas and behaviors, while holding meaningful conversations with people. She is designed to serve real world uses in medicine, education, and scientific research

The program was co-hosted by Michael Max Knobbe, Executive Director of BronxNet Community Television, and featured a live performance by Bronx-born singer Steven Maglio as well as other local entertainers.

“Simone Development Companies is proud to support the ongoing work of the Bronx Chamber of Commerce and to highlight, along with our co-sponsor Stagg Group, the limitless potential of artificial intelligence as a tool for business growth,” said Joe Simone, president of Simone Development Companies. “The annual Chamber gala offers a wonderful opportunity to recognize our fellow businesses and celebrate the fact that anything is possible when we work together.”

The 2024 Bronx Chamber Gala honored four organizations who have demonstrated their commitment to strengthening the Bronx business community through their distinct contributions:

D&J Transportation - Business of the Year
Monroe University - Community Organization of the Year
Lemle & Wolff Companies - Developer of the Year
Amazon - recipient of the Joseph P. Kelleher Award of Excellence

"Our honorees this year exemplify the innovation, dedication, and resilience that drive the Bronx forward," said Anthony Mormile, chairman of the Bronx Chamber Board of Directors. "Each has made a unique impact on our community that we are proud to celebrate. As we honor their achievements, we are also excited to showcase the future of commerce with SOPHIA, who embodies the potential of technology for business. This event not only reflected on past successes, but also looked ahead to the limitless possibilities that AI can bring to our borough."

Special thanks were extended to the 2024 Gala Sponsors:

Bronx AI Sponsors: Simone Development Companies, Stagg Group
Bronx Champions: Amazon, D&J Transportation, Lemle & Wolff
Bronx Partners: DoorDash, Bally's Casino, Monroe University
Bronx Supporters: Affinity by Molina Healthcare, KZA Realty Group, Ponce Bank, Empire City Casino by MGM Resorts, Orange Bank & Trust Co., Woodlawn Cemetery & Conservancy, Montefiore, RiteCheck, Kasirer, and Eye Mind Strategies.

The annual Gala raises vital unrestricted funding for the Bronx Chamber, with 100% of all contributions supporting its business and economic development programs.

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