

June 5, 2007
PRESS RELEASE
For immediate publication



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A prominent painter and a philanthropic businesswoman became the new faces of this year's Hispanic heritage month festivities. The Board of Directors of Tampa Hispanic Heritage, Inc. named Ms. Maria Steijlen as the 2007 Hispanic Woman of the Year and Dr. Ferdie Pacheco as the 2007 Hispanic Man of the Year. These awards honor those Hispanic figures that have contributed significantly to the success of our community.

Tampa native Dr. Pacheco, better known as "The Fight Doctor", is a notorious artist that spent his teenage years serving tables at Ybor City's Columbia Restaurant and later became the personal doctor of the legendary boxer Muhammad Ali. After 17 years assisting twelve world champions, Dr. Pacheco served for 25 years as a boxing commentator for NBC, Showtime and Univision, winning two Emmy awards. He later retired in order to dedicate the rest of his life to his paintings. Ybor City's cultural and urban icons became the muse for his colorful creations and for seven of his 14 published books.

Ms. Maria Steijlen, a Puerto Rican entrepreneur, became one of the most influential people in our community by raising thousands of dollars in scholarships for Latino students. Steijlen is an active member of numerous non-profit organizations devoted to the success of Hispanic children. For more than 16 years, Steijlen has coordinated important events under the Hispanic Professional Women Association, Mayor's Hispanic Advisory Council, and MOSI's Hispanic Scientist of the Year Award, among others, changing the lives of hundreds of underprivileged kids and "at risk" Hispanic students.

These outstanding individuals' achievements and community service will be recognized and honored at the Tampa Hispanic Heritage Inc.'s Gala, which will be held on Saturday, September 29th, 2007 at 6:30 p.m. at the Hyatt Regency Downtown Hotel. The community at large is invited to join in this celebration.

Tampa Hispanic Heritage, Inc. is a non-profit organization dedicated to preserve, promote, and celebrate our Hispanic culture. Both Ms. Steijlen and Dr. Pacheco exemplify the many qualities that have made Hispanics successful in our community. By their outstanding contributions, they have improved the quality of life in the Hispanic community.

For more information about the Hispanic Man and Woman of the Year Gala, please call Maruchi Azorin Blanco at (813) 831-6189, and Raquel Ache Leonard at (813) 846-2424 or visit www.tampahispanic.org.