

## [FUNDRAISING MATRIARCH BELLA FARROW makes Raphael House her top priority](#)

19 November 2007



*San Francisco fundraising matriarch Bella Farrow announces Farrow will make Raphael House her top priority for 2008. Farrow attended a Raphael House luncheon this month organized by longtime benefactor Sophie Azouaou, right, to thank those who have helped in the past. Raphael House, which takes no public funds, provides top quality housing and mentoring to homeless families.*

*Photo by Bill Wilson*



*Philanthropist Emily Goldman among the giving community which assisted Raphael House over the past year, with daughter attending luncheon.*

[Photo by Noble Vision](#)

**BY PAT MURPHY**



**Sentinel Editor & Publisher**

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A San Francisco jewel barely noticeable on Sutter Street sunburst smiles all around this month when mega fundraiser Bella Farrow came for salad and stayed to name Raphael House now her top priority.

Normally Farrow summons 5800 national philanthropists ten to 12 times each year, although she trimmed her schedule to only four planned fundraisers this year, she told luncheon guests.

Now 83-years-old, Farrow overcame three heart attacks in 2007.

They slowed her a beat, Farrow grinned, feigning dyslexia as she whispered she is 38.



“I’m very impressed,” reflected Farrow.

“I’m so glad that I’m here with my dear friend Mark and of course Sophie who was the instigator of getting me here.”



*Bella Farrow accompanied by longtime friend Mark Calvano, real estate broker and philanthropist.*

*[Photo by Noble Vision](#)*



*[Photo by Noble Vision](#)*

“I grew up with a very strong Italian family,” she told the crowd, with microphone hardly necessary.

“A spoiled Italian princess, so to speak, living in Piedmont.

“But that didn’t deter me from seeing what was happening around me, and I think that everybody should take this into consideration.

“Even if you only get involved in one fundraiser you are helping people become the individuals that God put them on this earth to be.

“Right now, I’m making this commitment, that I’m going to start working for Raphael House.

“I don’t own a computer. I don’t own a rolodex. I don’t even own a typewriter... all you’re going to find in my brain is names, addresses, and zip codes.”

She admonished neophyte fundraisers in the basics.

“They don’t say no but — *you got to ask to get!*” her finger stabbed the air.

“My commitment to Raphael House is I will do my utmost to put it primary on my list and do what I can to help in any way.”



*Teen Room Designed For Comfort and Dignity*  
[Photos by Noble Vision](#)



*Newly designed Raphael House Library  
Photo by David Toerge*

Father David Lowell oversees the facility.



*Orthodox Father David Lowell.*

“Raphael House has a dedicated staff and Board of Directors from the local community, along with a small core of live-in staff who are Orthodox Christian,” sketched Lowell.

“No religious obligations are placed on the families we serve.



“Raphael House relies solely on private sources to meet its annual budget. Support is received from individuals, businesses and corporations, foundations, church groups, and civic organizations that are committed to promoting stability for at-risk families.

“We do not seek or accept federal, state, or municipal government funding.”

Some 10,000 children so far have been served by Raphael House and more than 12,000 individuals have contributed money and volunteer time.



Sophie and husband Nouri Azouaou took note of Raphael House in 2006.

Sophie long looked to Bella Farrow for mentoring and is “someone I admire and that I hope to contribute to the City of San Francisco like she has,” Azouaou told the Sentinel.

“It is true, as my dream is to do half what she has done... she has taken me under wing so to speak.”



Vineyard owner Nouri Azouaou donates his wine and time to several San Francisco causes, while wife Sophie Azouaou operates [SophistiCate Interiors](#) and serves as special projects director for [Benefit Magazine](#) published on the lifestyle of giving.

Benefit Magazine introduced the Azouaous to Raphael House.

“Sophie first found out about Raphael House through the pages of Benefit Magazine,” recalled Paul Corso, Benefit co-founder.



*Benefit Magazine Co-Founder Paul Corso with Father Lowell.*

“Our mission at Benefit Magazine is to become the inspiration and the resource for giving.

“It’s very fulfilling to embark upon.

“We believe that whether you have the specific skills and the resources that Sophie has to do the kind of things that she’s done for Raphael House, or whether you’re for example someone who I met who’s working at the coatcheck at This Old Bag — the breast cancer event, had no idea who I was, I asked her how she got involved as a volunteer at This Old Bag.

“She doesn’t have the kind of abilities and the resources to do what Sophie does but does have ability to volunteer.

“She told me she read about it in the [pages](#) of Benefit Magazine, and that was truly remarkable for me and very fulfilling to hear that.”

Azouaou explained her experience with Raphael House.



“Raphael House means a lot to me,” she began.

“I was introduced last year to Raphael House and everything changed — I realized how each one of us can make a difference.

“So here I wanted to gather you all and to thank you for your support, for your help.

“Thank you so much my friends for your donations, for your time, for helping me.

“I would have never been able to do it without you.”

San Francisco extended its gratitude to Sophie Azouaou through Official Proclamation by Mayor Gavin Newsom.

Mary Wolfe, chair of the Raphael House Board of Directors, delivered the Proclamation.



*Mary Wolfe*

“I have the great honor on behalf of the mayor — our victorious mayor — to share with you a Proclamation that really honors Sophie and SophistiCate Interiors for all of their generous work here in San Francisco much of which has benefited Raphael House,” Wolfe stated.

December 15 2007 officially becomes SophistiCate Interiors Day in San Francisco.



*Philanthropist Anna Alioto.*

Email Sophie Azouaou at [sophie@sophisticateinteriors.com](mailto:sophie@sophisticateinteriors.com).