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Information

# HOTELS

## Citizen Hoteliers

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# Citizen HOTELIERS

*HOTELS* profiles a few of the countless hotel industry professionals who are bringing hospitality to those who truly need it most.

Jonathan Plutzik (l.) and his wife, Lesley Goldwasser (r.), pose with Zimbabwean singer Prudence Mabheba, whose U.S. tour was made possible by The Betsy Hotel.

By Adam Kirby, Associate Editor

**T**he past few years have seen increased awareness and attention to issues of sustainable hotelkeeping and responsible business practices across our industry. This is a laudable development, to be sure, but in truth the people of the hotel industry have always been at the forefront of the global business community when it comes to doing good in the world.

With that in mind, we at *HOTELS* want to shine a spotlight on a few individual hoteliers who are doing their part to make the world a better place. We thank these and all Citizen Hoteliers for their service.

**JONATHAN PLUTZIK**  
Owner, *The Betsy Hotel*,  
*Miami Beach*

**P**hilanthropy is at the very core of *The Betsy Hotel*, to such a degree that majority owner Jonathan Plutzik appointed a vice president of philanthropy, Deborah Biggs, whose primary job is to come up with ways to use the hotel as a tool to better the world.

Why base a swanky boutique hotel around a theme of philanthropy? "We simply believe in it," says Plutzik, a former vice chairman for Credit Suisse who quit Wall Street in 2002 so he could spend more time on charity work. He and some friends bought the 63-key

**FAST FACTS:** Orlando hotelier Harris Rosen personally donated US\$250,000 to help rebuild Haiti following the January earthquake there.

## SPECIAL REPORT

former Betsy Ross Hotel last year and renovated it into an upscale South Beach hotspot. "When we started doing the hotel, we felt strongly—both as a business and a personal matter—that the hotel establish itself as a philanthropic charitable force."

The Betsy's popularity provides Plutzik with a bully pulpit of sorts to engage the public at large in his charitable efforts, but more importantly, the hotel's physical space is a gathering place for community leaders to meet and engage others in dialogue about their many worthy causes. Plutzik regularly holds salons in The Betsy's bar with thought leaders from the arts world. "It's not just giving money, and it's not just having an event," says Plutzik, 55. "It's about being a catalyst for philanthropic things."

Philanthropy seems to run in the family. Plutzik's 16-year-old daughter, Rachael, took the money given to her for her bat mitzvah and used it to start a charity to assist AIDS orphans in Zimbabwe. Zara's Center now provides basic necessities like food and water to these needy children, along with a place for them to learn life skills and receive medical care.

From the family's connection with Zara's Center, Plutzik came to know Prudence Mabhena, the 21-year-old severely disabled lead singer of the band Liyana. The Betsy Hotel arranged for the band to come to the United States and play a few shows. The trip was recorded by a documentary crew, and the resulting film, "Music by Prudence," was nominated for an Oscar.

*For more information about Zara's Center, visit [www.zaracentertrust.com](http://www.zaracentertrust.com).*