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Actress Sharon Stone to headline UMES Gala

By Deborah Gates
Staff Writer

PRINCESS ANNE — Actress and humanitarian Sharon Stone, whose box-office hits include the crime drama “Casino” and the erotic thriller “Basic Instinct” is coming to Princess Anne.



Stone heads a lineup of celebrity guests in motion pictures and television attending the 12th annual UMES Gala in March, and organizers are counting on the star-studded slate of talents to attract donors who dig deep for hefty donations toward student scholarships at the rural, historically black liberal arts institution, which is facing rising tuition costs and tightened belts.

If the gala is a repeat performance of last year’s sold-out celebrity bash, dubbed by UMES President Thelma Thompson as among “the best parties on the Shore,” the University of Maryland Eastern Shore’s annual signature fundraising event could reach or surpass the \$280,000 raised a year ago.

An estimated 20 students to date are recipients of financial assistance from an endowment established from gala proceeds since the event debuted in 1999, said Veronique Diriker, director of development at UMES and gala organizer.

Organizers are finalizing commitments from four other guest celebrities expected to join Stone for a two-day event, themed “Hollywood on the Shore.” An announcement of stars to complete the lineup should be made by early next week, Diriker said.

The gala weekend includes a March 4 celebrity reception in Ocean City at the Courtyard Marriott and a March 5 gala dinner-dance on the UMES campus with live entertainment and live and silent auctions.

“There are a lot of galas in the community, and we want to be the best on the Shore, and to be different,” Diriker said. “We had an opportunity to bring a well-known celebrity to the Shore — this is a way to do it.”

The Hollywood theme was introduced in 2010, and the event quickly sold out within weeks of an announcement that Dionne Warwick, Patty Duke, BB King and other celebrities would be special guests. Fanfare surrounding the event helped promote not only UMES but the Lower Shore, Diriker said.

“Students are excited, and we are excited to bring people from the outside to the event that showcases students,” Diriker said. “Every year we are a sell-out; people want to support us and want to be there.”

A celebrity publicist and gala consultant living in Princess Anne, Andrea Sims, was instrumental in securing a commitment from Stone and the other celebrities, Diriker said. Sims also secured celebrities who attended in 2010, she said.

Stone, a former model whose career in motion pictures started in 1980, had a star imprinted on the Hollywood Walk of Fame on Hollywood Boulevard in November 1995.

In the 1995 motion picture "Casino," she starred with Robert De Niro and was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Actress. The film also won Stone a Golden Globe Award for Best Actress in a Motion Picture Drama.

Stone, also a producer, played the role of Catherine Tramell in the 1992 thriller "Basic Instinct," for which she was nominated for a Golden Globe Award for Best Actress in a Motion Picture Drama.

Most recently, Stone performed in several 2010 episodes of the hit television drama, "Law & Order Special Victims Unit."

Stone is also a recognized activist and humanitarian who works to raise support to fight HIV and AIDS, and spoke at the chapel in Harvard yard upon receiving Harvard University's Humanitarian Award; she remains a visiting professor. She also co-hosted the Nobel Peace Prize Concert in Norway and offered two lectures at the Karolinska Institute.

She is the recipient of the World Charity Award presented by the former Russian President, Mikhail Gorbachev.

Additional Facts

If you go

WHAT. 12th annual UMES Gala

WHERE. Courtyard Marriott in Ocean City and the Student Services Center on the campus of the University of Maryland Eastern Shore in Princess Anne

WHEN. March 4 reception at the Marriott; March 5 at UMES

MORE. Oscar tickets, \$150, includes gourmet hors d'oeuvres, four-course dinner among celebrity guests, dancing and live music, souvenir photos and live and silent auctions at the March 5 gala VIP tickets add a March 4 reception with celebrities at the Marriott as well as a special reception with celebrities an hour before the gala.

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