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By Irene Mosalli
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American Foundation for Saint George Hospital Honors Prominent US Lawyer Steve Yerrid

He beat the large tobacco companies and won major trials. Steven Yerrid, overflowing with ideas and generosity, was at the center of the Foundation's second annual gala. The American Foundation for Saint George Hospital is presided over by a quiet, tenacious man: Dr. Amin Barakat. He explained during the Foundation's second annual gala: "The objective at this gala is to help Saint George Hospital provide quality medical services in Lebanon and the region, in particular for the disadvantaged. This year we are focusing on the Hospital's pediatric care program, with special attention to the treatment of various cancers [such as the case to be mentioned later in the evening by Dr. Walid Chalhoub]. On behalf of our Board of Directors, I would like to thank all those who, by getting involved in our work, make a difference. It is in this context that I would like to offer our "Make a Difference Award" to Steven Yerrid, not only a prominent lawyer, but also a lawyer for the cause of sick children needing medical assistance, especially those with cancers." This award was presented to him by Mrs. Nicole Chedid, wife of Mr. Antoine Chedid (Ambassador of Lebanon). Mr. Chedid was attending another charity event in San Francisco.

From his office in Tampa, [Florida], Steven Yerrid won landmark cases against powerful cigarette manufacturers (winning billions of dollars in compensation for the plaintiffs) and a company responsible for oil spills. He didn't hide his emotions while receiving this distinction: "Choukran jazilan. At this moment I am thinking about 'my sitti and my jeddi' who would have been so proud of me. I am speaking to you right now from the bottom of my heart, as I do in a courtroom, where of course I prepare a few remarks in advance! My message is simple: The greatest accomplishment in my life has been helping others. This, I learned from my "sitti" and "jeddi". My grandmother's kitchen was the headquarters of our neighborhood, and it was always filled with the children of Greek and Italian emigrants -- children whose families had emigrated just like ours. I learned there that sharing is a source of reconciliation, something we tend to forget in troubled times in the Middle East and even here. The secret to my success? A good relationship with others. I have to tell you that I have never succeeded in my life without the support of others, and when I failed, it was because I was alone -- without help from God or anyone. If you want miracles to happen, it is impossible to act alone. My presence here is a symbol of what my life is: The possibility to live my most precious dreams.

Steven Yerrid's paternal grandfather, George, came straight from Zahle, accompanied by his wife Millie [born Lawand]. The couple settled in Charleston [West Virginia], established a food business, and raised four children, one of them

Charles, father of Steven Yerrid, born to an Irish mother, Fay Griffith. Charles specialized in press machines and worked for 40 years at the *Washington Post*. It was during one of his visits to his father that Steven got the chance to enroll in law school at Georgetown University, where he was a brilliant student. His career had a spectacular start, when at the age of 35 he attained international fame obtaining the acquittal of a ship captain accused of causing 35 deaths. Steven's risky – but successful – defense declared the disaster an Act of God rather than human error. Intractable in court, he spends much of his free time fundraising for charities. When he needs a break, he sails on one of his many boats. "I love being on the water," he says. His favorite passengers: wife Tiffany (who is of Greek origin), their 8-year-old son, and his 21-year-old son (from a previous marriage).

Program of this second gala: A very lively auction (including a handbag by Elie Saab) and a performance by the Youth Dance Company of Dancing Classrooms.