



SHE'S THE BOSS Astrid Amaya is the chairperson of the organising committee

WORLD CLASS

What can we expect from the YWCA Thailand's charity bazaar?

YWCA THAILAND'S 62nd International Diplomatic Charity Bazaar takes place on November 20-22 at CentralWorld. Fine products from 42 countries will be spread out across the entire mall and proceeds from the annual event will go to some 40 different charity programmes. The chairperson of the bazaar, Astrid Amaya—also a businesswoman, philanthropist and the wife of the Colombian ambassador—took a few minutes out from planning the event to tell us what to expect.

How did you get into this role?
I heard about the bazaar when I first moved to Thailand about two and a half years ago and it immediately sparked my interest. Whenever I met the other diplomatic wives who were already involved in the organisation, I would always offer advice and fresh ideas. Eventually, I was asked to get involved and become the chairwoman.

Even though it's a non-profit event, I think it's important to bring a business perspective into the mix. This is a key factor and it's how I work in everything that I set out to do. The smallest details need to be organised to ensure that everything runs smoothly so that we can effectively raise funds.

I absolutely love it and the women in the YWCA are such amazing people to work with. They volunteer and put all their time and effort in reaching out to the needy and making a difference. I'm very enthusiastic about my role in such events and what it represents. I've been to many destitute areas and every time I do, I'm increasingly encouraged to become more and more engaged. My philosophy is that one doesn't have to change the world but if you can change the life of a single person, it's good enough.

What can we expect to find when we come along to the bazaar?
There are so many different products this year. From Colombia, we've got wine and coffee along with a line of our internationally known swimsuits. New Zealand will be providing an extensive variety of fruits, while Norway will be supplying its fine salmon. Electronic goods are coming from Germany, Switzerland, the US, the UK and China. There will also be tea from Kenya and Sri Lanka and Thailand. In addition, you'll find

goods such as cosmetics, fabric shoes, jewellery and more. Israel, Greece, Poland and Colombia are participating for the first time this year.

Where do the proceeds go?
About 40 different programmes and projects benefit from these funds that help provide basic needs and access to healthcare in some of the most remote areas. They also help to provide education and contribute to the improvement of educational facilities that often don't even have bathrooms or a place for the children to eat. This event enables us to provide computers, medication and much more. Children who need cleft lip and palate treatment are also able to undergo operations due to our proceeds. The funds will be spent according to different needs that are regularly evaluated and analysed by the YWCA every year. Very little of the money we raise goes to the administrative needs of the YWCA. Almost all of the proceeds are spent on projects related to fostering young girls, or accessibility to health care and education and more.

What else are you involved in?
I'm an advocate for the empowerment of women—it's vital in today's society, a must, at any level of society. Currently I'm involved in several projects here in Thailand and in the US that focus on empowering women. Through my own project, I've just recently managed to promote the artwork of an extremely gifted Thai girl, which has been selected for display in a notable exhibition in Boston. In countries such as Thailand, empowering women is crucial if we want to ensure a better standard of living for them and to make sure these young women and girls grow up to be self-sustaining members of society.