

\$100 could win you a condo

Local nonprofit organizing unique raffle effort

BY AARON RUPAR

Erik Brown, an Uptown-based ReMax Realtor, is hoping to raise \$1 million for William Panzarella's two-bedroom condo at 45th Street and Chicago Avenue.

Brown isn't crazy, and his \$1 million goal isn't indicative of a stunningly sudden 180-degree reversal in condo values. Rather, teaming with the Aegis Foundation, a South Minneapolis-based nonprofit, he hopes to sell 10,000 raffle tickets at \$100 a pop, with the proceeds going to Aegis and the raffle winner getting Panzarella's \$230,000, 1,195-square-foot condo, no strings attached.

Since he founded Aegis three years ago, Panzarella has worked to make his foundation the most fun nonprofit in town. On a few occasions each year, Panzarella taps into his social network and throws huge parties at venues like Solera and Thom Pham's Wondrous Azian Kitchen. The Aegis board of directors then distributes all

proceeds from the parties to community partners specializing in youth services, alternative education, life skills, vocational training, homelessness, pregnancy, STD and HIV/AIDS prevention, and other youth related concerns.

During its first three years, Aegis has supported the work of One Heartland, Face to Face, Reclaim, the Smile Network, Safe Zone, Praxis Education Project and the Emergency Foodshelf Network, among others. In total, Aegis has raised more than \$300,000 for the nonprofits, and that total will more than double this year if Brown and Panzarella come near their goal of selling 10,000 raffle tickets before summer is over.

Panzarella has worked in international shipping logistics for more than 20 years. His work has taken him all over the world — everywhere from Dallas to Hong Kong. Wherever he goes, he uses his free time to volunteer for youth-focused organizations. And when he's not working or volunteering, he's socializing (Panzarella cites Lil' Kim, Faith Evans and Macy Gray as close personal friends cultivated



PHOTO BY AARON RUPAR

William Panzarella is raffling off his \$230,000 condo for charity.

with his success in the latter now paying dividends in his capacity as Aegis's executive officer.

The idea of Aegis was borne out of Panzarella's experiences volunteering for Face to Face in St. Paul. Panzarella was dismayed to learn that Face to Face planned to eliminate its LGBT youth group because of

to do what he could to try and keep the program alive.

"I thought to myself, 'What if I threw a party? Could that help?' So I had all my friends come down, and we threw a day-long party on a Sunday at [414] Sound Bar in downtown Minneapolis," Panzarella said, adding that the party raised \$17,000 for Face to Face.

Last month, the foundation organized and sold 500 tickets for Minneapolis's official Oscars party at Hotel Ivy. Events connected with the upcoming Out Twin Cities Film Festival and Pride Festival are in the works, and Panzarella recently expanded Aegis to Chicago and Los Angeles.

Panzarella is still working in Chicago, and he said that he spends most of his time in Minneapolis at his partner's home, making ownership of his condo a luxury he can do without.

Closing costs, ReMax fees, and debt service will cost about \$300,000, meaning that Aegis hopes to come away with about \$700,000 once the raffle takes place in September.

Though Panzarella was initially disappointed as he watched his 4500 Chicago Ave. S. condo decline in value — he purchased the property for \$280,000 shortly after moving to Minneapolis in 2004 — he began to view the situation as an opportunity after he read about a similar home raffle that raised \$3 million in Maryland a couple years ago.

"Raffling it off is better than selling it for a loss, and it'll help to sustain something that we all care a lot about," he said.

MORE INFO

To learn more about the condo raffle, go to aegisfoundation.org