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First Presidency speaks at gala

By Jessica Gurnsey *Daily Universe Staff Reporter* - 31 Oct 2005

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President Gordon B. Hinckley gave a small speech at a gala hosted by Enterprise Mentors International Friday night, ending his remarks in the name of Christ – the same way he would end any church or conference talk.

But this was not a church meeting, so the crowd echoed a resounding amen followed by cheerful applause.

All three members of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints attended the gala at the Marriott hotel in downtown Salt Lake City.

Enterprise Mentors International (EMI), a non-profit organization, extends micro-credit, or small loans, to people in developing countries put on the event and recognized the First Presidency for their support of the organization since it began in 1990.

“We appreciate and acknowledge that the work of Enterprise Mentors International is truly quite remarkable,” said President James E. Faust, second counselor in the First Presidency of the church.

Enterprise Mentors hosted the gala in honor of the First Presidency and their help in the inception of the organization in 1990, said Menlo Smith, EMI co-founder.

Most of EMI’s loans average \$180 and help families and individuals begin small businesses to support themselves.

A team of graduate students from the Marriott School of Business at BYU did the initial research into how to best help the people of underdeveloped countries. This team gave EMI the organizational structure for the micro-credit program.

Once EMI had a plan, the Church’s Humanitarian Fund matched funds raised by the group to help the program get started. The leaders of the Church were also influential in assisting the group to find contacts in underdeveloped countries where missionary work was strong.

EMI reports they have helped 270,000 people with almost \$12 million in loans over the past 15



Photo by Robb Costello

Menlo F. Smith, EMI Co-Founder, presents President Gordon B. Hinckley with a gift from the Enterprise Mentors International group for the church’s role in helping EMI succeed in developing countries.

years. They have a 95 percent collection rate on the loans they give out.

Friday night, EMI gave three \$2,000 educational scholarships to residents of Brazil in the name of the First Presidency. The organization wanted to honor the First Presidency and through the best way to do it would be by offering an education to others, said Sally Wyne, a committee member who helped organize the event. Two former Brazil mission presidents donated the money for the scholarships.

In addition to the scholarship presentation, the gala featured a performance by the International Children's Choir, a group that has performed all over the world. Following the choir's performance, attendees enjoyed dinner while Elizabeth Smart played the harp.

Mary Ellen Smoot, former Relief Society general president, organized the event, which was attended by more than 900 people and raised \$144,000 for Enterprise Mentors.

A committee, headed by Smoot, planned the gala for six months. They wrote the First Presidency asking if one member would be willing to attend, and were surprised when all three wanted to attend, said Bruce B. Bingham, event vice-chair.

Bingham said he thought high attendance at the event was due to the First Presidency's participation. Many other church and local leaders were also present. President Boyd K. Packer, Elder Dallin H. Oaks and Bishop H. David Burton all attended the event as well as Utah Gov. Jon Huntsman and Sen. Orrin Hatch.

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- [Image: Elder Robert E. Wells greets members of the First Presidency during the Fifteenth Anniversary Celebration of the Enterprise Mentors International group where President Gordon B. Hinckley was presented with a gift from the group for the church's role in helping EMI succeed in developing countries.](#)



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