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- All -

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- Main Menu**
- ▶ Home
- ▶ Apartments
- ▶ Autos
- ▶ sandiego.com Blogs
- ▶ Business Directory
- ▶ Coupons
- ▶ City News Roundup
- ▶ Events
- ▶ Hotel Guide
- ▶ Jobs
- ▶ Sitemap
- ▶ Movies
- ▶ Real Estate
- ▶ Relocation Guide
- ▶ Travel Guide
- ▶ Weather

- Article Topics**
- ▶ Arts
- ▶ Beach Life
- ▶ Business
- ▶ Consumer
- ▶ Dining



**San Diego Business**

**Bottled Water With A Conscience**

*Nika brand vows 100 percent of profits will go to impoverished cities around the world*

By Ron Donoho

Posted on Fri, May 22nd, 2009

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In San Diego's downtown Gaslamp Quarter, one night spot shimmers a little brighter than others. Stingaree has been lauded as one of the country's top nightclubs by Conde Nast Traveler. There's a ground floor restaurant and two upper floors that attract lines that go around the block every weekend night. The girls get glammed up in shiny silver and black dresses. Males moussé their hair high, and look for a bouncer they know who might be able to let them cut the line. Inside, patrons drink and dance and keep an eye on who's wearing what. It's a scene.

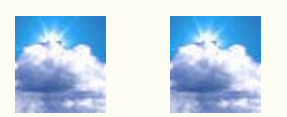
Every Friday night in March, Stingaree—which is gearing up to apply for a LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) designation—celebrated "The Green Side of Sting." The sizeable rooftop area, filled with fire pits, cabanas, a bar and lots of mingling room, was themed out for eco-minded celebrations. The bar partnered with charitable organizations like Surfrider Foundation, EcoLife Foundation, StayClassy.org and the Center for Sustainable Energy. Some Fridays, the club put on a special laser show. Other nights there were fashion shows, disc jockeys and other festive activities.

To keep guests in an ecological mind—and simply to keep others more hydrated and less inebriated—Stingaree partnered with a new line of bottled water that fits the green theme. Nika is the first certified carbon-free brand of water. One hundred percent of the San Diego-based company's profits go to alleviating global poverty and creating drinkable water solutions in Third-World countries.



One visible component of the socially-conscious brand is the artwork on the sides of the water bottles. Each is

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wrapped by one of three colorful paintings by internationally renowned painter Stephen Bennett. Each label depicts likely Third-World benefactors of Nika's program.

"We replaced Voss water with Nika," says Stingaree general manager Dave Renzella. "This is definitely something different for us. No, you wouldn't normally expect to see us put out table service and have something like Nika water bottles on it."

Stingaree now uses Nika every night on the rooftop bar. Other places where you can find Nika water include the Sheraton San Diego Hotel & Marina, and about 15 smaller outlets like Java Jones Coffeehouse, Sweet and Savory Gourmet and Gelato Vero.

The company was founded by the families of Jeff Church, Mike Stone and David Perez. You might remember Perez—he was in the news in 2005 when he spent \$250,000 to hire a Boeing 737 to fly Hurricane Katrina evacuees from Baton Rouge to San Diego.

The founders are all seasoned business executives in the for-profit arena. They funded the Nika startup costs, and say they'll get no compensation or economic benefit from sales.

Church believes informed consumers will opt for a brand that has a conscience. He says if the company can capture just a tenth of a percent of the world's bottled water market share, and if they can generate 20 cents per bottle in profit that would translate to an annual contribution of \$2 million to impoverished communities.

To date, Nika is associated with aid to cities in Nicaragua, Uganda and Sri Lanka. Next time you buy a bottle of water from the rooftop bar at Stingaree, realize you're supporting the Adopt a Village program in Pimbiniyet, Kenya, where Nika has funded approximately \$235,000 of a project that includes building a school and a water catchment system.

**Business Sector** : Water

*About the author: Ron Donoho is the former executive editor of San Diego Magazine. He has won more than three dozen Press Club and Society of Professional Journalists awards. His work has been published in Men's Health, Men's Journal, Maxim, Glamour, The Christian Science Monitor and several other national publications. He is also a daily featured contributor on NBCsandiego.com. More by this author.*

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Posted by Anonymous

Sat, May 23rd, 2009



I'd skip the bottled water altogether...

<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/08/12/fashion/12water.html>

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