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Late Sports Final

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PRIDE ON PARADE



STACIA TIMONERE-FOR SUN TIMES MEDIA

Luis Machado (left) and Jennifer Rivera were among about 1 million who turned out Sunday for the Pride Parade, where the push for same-sex marriage was issue No. 1. **PAGE 4**

[PARADE VIDEO AT SUNTIMES.COM/VIDEO >>](http://SUNTIMES.COM/VIDEO)



UNO HAD MONEY FOR PARTY — NOT FOR ITS BILLS

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THE WATCHDOGS

THIS WEEK BY DAN MIHALOPOULOS

UNO HAD MONEY FOR GALA, NOT CONTRACTORS

Cheered on by Gov. Pat Quinn and Mayor Rahm Emanuel, the United Neighborhood Organization celebrated the opening of its new \$22 million charter school on the Northwest Side last September with a laser light show and fireworks display.

The cost? More than \$143,000, according to records obtained by the Chicago Sun-Times.

Now, more than nine months after the grand opening of the UNO Galewood Charter School, 10 contractors say the politically well-connected charter-school operator stiffed them out of more than \$1.3 million they're owed for work on the school at 2050 N. Natchez.

"We want to be paid for the work we did," says John D'Angelo, president of State Mechanical Services, which filed a lien May 10 for nearly \$400,000 — the second-biggest of the claims.

D'Angelo's Naperville business installed the school's heating and air-conditioning.

The bill for the Galewood school extravaganza came to at least \$143,679.13, according to UNO documents obtained by the Sun-Times.

UNO chief executive Juan Rangel — who co-chaired Emanuel's 2011 mayoral campaign — won't say where the money for the celebration came from.

The organization relies



The light show and fireworks for UNO's Galewood Charter School cost more than \$143,000. VIDEO ONLINE: Go to suntimes.com/news/watchdogs to see the grand opening. | VIDEO IMAGE

almost entirely on government funding for its charter schools. It gets tens of millions of dollars a year in Chicago Public Schools funding to operate its 13 schools.

UNO's charter network has grown quickly, fueled by a \$98 million school-construction grant pushed through the Illinois Legislature in 2009 by House Speaker Michael Madigan (D-Chicago).

The Quinn administration temporarily halted payments from that grant in April, after the Sun-Times reported UNO paid

\$8.5 million from the state funding to two companies owned by brothers of a former top UNO executive, Miguel d'Escoto, who quit his \$200,000-a-year job after the report.

The revelation also prompted the Quinn administration to demand that UNO get an outside audit.

Though the audit wasn't completed, Quinn announced in early June he was restoring the state funding, allowing UNO to resume work on its half-built UNO Soccer Academy Charter High School at 51st and St.

Louis on the Southwest Side.

Quinn had been urged to do so by Ald. Edward Burke (14th) — one of his biggest campaign contributors — so work could be finished in time for the school to open for the coming school year.

So far, the state has given UNO about \$61 million of the \$98 million that was promised in 2009.

Funding from the grant was to have covered the entire budget of the \$22 million Galewood school, as well as that of the new high school.

A spokesman for UNO dismisses the liens filed by



Ten contractors say they are owed more than \$1.3 million for work at Galewood, 2050 N. Natchez. | JESSICA KOSCIELNIAK-SUN-TIMES

the contractors as "standard end-of-project negotiations . . . This is a normal part of the process at the end of construction work."

A source at F.H. Paschen/S.N. Nielsen — the Chicago company that was general contractor for the Galewood school — says UNO still owes it more than the total of what the subcontractors on the Galewood project say they are owed. The general contractor has not filed a claim for non-payment.

The biggest claim — more than \$516,000 — is from Reflection Window & Wall, which had a \$2.25 million deal to work on the Galewood school. Reflection Window, which filed its liens Feb. 5, has worked on each of the new charter schools UNO built with funding from the state grant. The company is owned by Rodrigo d'Escoto, a brother of Miguel d'Escoto, the former UNO second-in-command.

In lien documents filed with the Cook County recorder of deeds office, Rodrigo d'Escoto says

the money his company is seeking is for work it was asked to do on the Galewood school that went beyond the scope of its original contract. Scott R. Fradin, an attorney for Reflection Window, says the company and its suppliers did the extra work "with the understanding that they would be fully and fairly compensated."

Another company, Alexander Gammie Associates Plumbing & Heating Co., filed a lien in February saying it was owed nearly \$110,000 for work on the Galewood school. A recorded message at the company's office in Forest Park says it ceased operations May 10 "due to circumstances beyond our control" and refers callers to a lawyer who did not respond to requests for comment.

An UNO spokesman says IFF, a not-for-profit organization brought in to oversee the completion of the UNO Soccer Academy Charter High School, is also trying to resolve the disputes with the Galewood school contractors.