

Polo for Heart brings fashion and equestrian to York Region



By Jake Courtepatte

The Gormley Polo Club in Richmond Hill was the site for polo enthusiasts from across North America over the weekend to get a taste of the rich equestrian culture of York Region.

The event, Polo for Heart, has been raising money for heart and stroke-related charities for over 35 years. The weekend-long fundraiser was much more than a polo match, providing a silent auction, live bands, car show, dancing, and even a best hat contest.

Adding to the affair was a demonstration from the award-winning Canadian Cowgirl Drill Team, as well as the Descenders, a skydiving team from Toronto who parachuted onto the pitch.

Although known as the "sport of kings," to many the social aspect and money raised were more than enough cause to stay the weekend.

"It's so nice to just spend the day outside with your friends and family," said Katie Black, whose parents own a horse farm in Markham. "Seeing everybody dressed up, and you can bring your own picnic and just hang out, and see all the beautiful horses."

Since its inception the event has raised over \$5 million, with this year's funds once again allocated to the Heart and Stroke Foundation and cardiac research at Southlake Regional Health Centre.

"The Heart and Stroke Foundation is dedicated to helping Canadians live heart-healthy lives, and our volunteers and donors are key to accomplishing that," said Tom McAllister, CEO, Heart and Stroke Foundation, Ontario.

The funds generated will partly be used for an MRI to select patients in need of heart surgery, and for the expansion of Southlake's Heart Rhythm program, one of the busiest in the country but severely under facilitated.

"Through such initiatives we hope to discover new ways of treating heart disease and stroke and help create more survivors," said McAllister.

Southlake's Cardiac Care centre is the third largest in Ontario, having worked on over 100,000 patients in the ten years since it opened.