

Polo for Heart celebrates fortieth anniversary



By Jake Courtepatte

The scenic Toronto Polo Club was the venue for one of the Region's swankiest events on Saturday, hosting the annual Polo for Heart.

Raising funds for the Southlake Foundation, horses and humans alike reveled in a bright summer's day to come together for a good cause.

Equestrian enthusiasts from across Southern Ontario who converge on the grounds annually for a weekend of high-fashion, fine food, and the sport of kings are among the area's elite: though at its core, the main focus of attendees and volunteers alike is charity.

In fact, an incredible \$6-million plus has been raised over the event's 39 years to help fund heart disease and stroke treatment and research.

'It's helped us do all kinds of innovative work,' said Susan Mullin, President and CEO of Southlake Regional Health Centre Foundation, the beneficiary of the funds. 'We've had a couple of 'world- firsts' at Southlake, thanks to Polo for Heart in part.'

York Regional Police, the Canadian Cowgirls, and internationally renowned polo players entertained a packed house of attendees, donned with the most audacious of hats and dressed to the nines.

'The money raised at Polo for Heart helps Heart & Stroke pursue our mission to prevent heart disease and stroke, save lives and promote recovery for everyone across the country,' said Avril Goffredo, CEO Ontario & Nunavut, Heart & Stroke. 'We know there's still much work to be done because every five minutes, someone in Canada is lost to heart disease, stroke and related conditions.'

?We are grateful for the support of Polo For Heart over so many years as they help us fund research and promote awareness, and we've thrilled to join them to celebrate their 40th anniversary.?

?Polo for Heart has been a long-time supporter of Southlake and over the years has made a tremendous impact for tens of thousands of patients served through our Regional Cardiac Care Program, the third largest in Ontario,? said Mullin. ?Southlake serves cardiac patients from York Region to as far north as Muskoka. We simply could not do it without this kind of support that is crucial in helping us keep up with changing technology continue providing leading-edge care. We are excited and proud to be part of Polo for Heart once again this year, celebrating their 40th anniversary event.?

Saturday's big day succeeded Thursday night's opener, dubbed ?Polo Under the Stars?, where guests took to the pitch for a gourmet dinner and a pair of international polo matches, all while serenaded by Juno nominee George St. Kitts.

Thursday's festivities also featured a best hat contest judged by CTV's The Social's Melissa Grelo, and David Dunkley of David Dunkley Fine Millinery, who is the official milliner of Polo for Heart.

Every seven minutes, someone in Canada dies from heart disease and stroke. An estimated 1.6 million more are living with the devastating effects of these diseases, while nine in ten Canadians have at least one risk factor, such as high blood pressure, obesity, tobacco use, lack of physical activity, and diabetes.

Over 10,000 cardiac patients are treated at Southlake each year.