

Designer handbag auction to benefit Sisters Academy

It's a fact of female life – many women love handbags and shoes. To divert from the standard “bingo in a basement” event, the spirited Baltimore City Division I Ladies Ancient Order of Hibernians (LAOH) is hosting a September event called Bags to Riches to profit Sisters Academy of Baltimore.

LAOH is an Irish Catholic heritage group. Its Baltimore division is relatively new considering LAOH was organized in 1894. The local group consists of 20 members, representing about 10 parishes in the Baltimore area.

“We have a lot of new, young ideas,” said Karen McGullam, event vice-chair, “with a youthful outlook of all ages from 20s to 70s.”

The local group has held several fundraisers over the past two years to prepare for the Bags to Riches event.

“We wanted to splash out and aim high and do something different to put Baltimore City division's stamp on it,” Ms. McGullam said. “As a new division, we're trying to prove ourselves.”

Her co-chair is Nanci Mahoney, and the group president is Mollie McDonnell.

The driving force behind their hard work is supporting a school of girls of an impressionable age. A Catholic school in Lansdowne with grades five through eight, Sisters Academy serves students typically from low-income, one-parent families.

“We're hoping to give the school a big check,” Ms. McGullam said.

In addition to Sisters Academy, the Maryland board of LAOH also raises funds for The Franciscan Center for homeless men in Baltimore.

On Sept. 28 from 2-6 p.m. at Grey Rock Mansion in Pikesville, event-goers will have the chance to bid on more than 80 donated designer handbags, tote bags and men's bags, with fast-paced urging from a live auctioneer.

The afternoon will also afford chances to bid on gift certificates, clothing, items for men and a variety of silent auction items. High-end, mid-priced and affordable items will be available for purchase during the “not a girl-only day.”

A Frank Sinatra-type singer will provide entertainment while shoppers feast on gourmet desserts and Asian, Italian and other ethnic food at various stations.

Yet for LAOH to meet its mission of “friendship, unity and Christian charity,” and to make the event a big hit, the group needs to sell 200 tickets.

“We’re looking to boost ticket sales,” said Ms. McGullam, a parishioner of Sacred Heart, Glyndon. “We’re looking to fill Grey Rock to maximize the check we can give to Sister Delia (Dowling, S.S.N.D., school president). The more attendees, the more it will help the girls.”

LAOH sponsored one Sisters Academy student from the 2008 graduating class, Danielle Hipkins, and the group is working on another partial scholarship for a member of the class of 2012.

Tickets for Bags to Riches are \$40 or two for \$75. Send checks payable to Ladies Ancient Order of Hibernians, c/o Mollie McDonnell, 109 Starhill Lane, Baltimore MD 21228.

Call 410-952-6676 for more information.