

Fencers raise thousands for Sister's Academy

For the second year in a row, Dan Collins, senior director of media relations for Mercy Medical Center, and longtime friend, teacher and sport advocate Ray Gordon took part in the Chesapeake Fencing Club's second annual Megabout, a fundraising effort for the Sisters Academy of Baltimore.

Collins, who began fencing in 1986, refers to it as "physical chess."

"You have to be physically relaxed and mentally focused," he said. "It's a hard thing to do."

As described by the United States Fencing Association, "fencing is fast and athletic, a far cry from the choreographed bouts you see on film or on the stage. Instead of swinging from a chandelier or leaping from balconies, you will see two fencers performing an intense dance on a 6-foot-by-44-foot strip. The movement is so fast that the touches are scored electrically - a lot more like 'Star Wars' than Errol Flynn."

In 2007, the Chesapeake Fencing Club raised close to \$5,000 for the event, and the 2008 total looks to be about the same.

Money is raised by seeking pledges. For every \$50 pledged, Collins and Gordon would each fence a bout. A bout is five touches to the designated scoring area. Collins and Gordon each fenced 70-plus bouts in 2007 and approximately 75 bouts each on April 19 at the Chesapeake Fencing Club, located on Homeland Avenue in Baltimore.

"It was a great turnout," said Collins, who faced many youth fencers on the day. "It's a great sport and a growing sport, one that is good for you both physically and mentally."

Collins had lost some 60 pounds in the late 1980s and was ready to try something new. He took a fencing class at the YMCA in Towson from Ray Gordon and liked it so

much, he continued to attend many fencing classes. He became comfortable in the sport and now travels to compete.

The Chesapeake Fencing Club is celebrating its 15th anniversary this year and looks to continue its Megabouts for many years to come in support of the Sisters Academy of Baltimore.