

# Polo players saddle up for Our Daily Bread

Although the day was sticky, the storms held off for the sixth annual Ten Oaks Cup Polo Match June 11, which benefited Our Daily Bread.

Tents and horse trailers lined the freshly mowed polo field at the home of Dr. Fred and Mary Agnes Lewis in Clarksville, not far from St. Louis Church, the Lewis' parish.

"This is probably the largest turnout we've ever had," said Bill McCarthy, executive director of Catholic Charities. "It's wonderful how volunteers come up with creative ways to support the mission."

In the past, the event has raised a total of more than \$250,000, and McCarthy expected this year's match to meet its goal of raising \$50,000. One hundred percent of the proceeds go to Our Daily Bread. Corporate sponsorship was evident as well; the riders in white jeans wore shirts representing the businesses that sponsored them, the program was thick with advertisements, and the field was festooned with sponsorship signs.

The world of polo - complete with well-dressed women in hats, shining horses and a crowd that stomped the divots at halftime - seems far removed from Our Daily Bread, which provides an employment center and a daily meal for the homeless and working poor in downtown Baltimore.

But those at the event welcomed a chance to give back and spoke of a very real connection with Our Daily Bread.

"We've been in Howard County since 1954, and the county has been wonderful to us and our family," said Mary Agnes Lewis. "We just feel very grateful and Our Daily Bread has been very close to my heart since I first went in there 30 years ago." Mary Agnes coordinates the chicken dinners that St. Louis provides weekly for Our Daily Bread, and she volunteers as a server.

She started volunteering back when Our Daily Bread was housed in a row house, feeding just 44 people a day; today it serves more than 700 people in a facility that has room for offices, classrooms and Christopher Place, a residential program.

"It's a very rewarding thing to do; it really is," she said. Mary Agnes and her husband, Fred, a veterinarian, are the parents of 10 children; four of them were competing in the polo matches.

Jim Lewis, who is a large animal veterinarian, says it was natural that the equine-oriented family would host the Ten Oaks Polo Cup. They were inspired to do so by their friends Charlie Muldoon and Mara Hagan, who have held polo benefits before.

"My mom was involved with Our Daily Bread, and they have the horsepower to do it," Jim said with a laugh.

Jim, who grew up riding and breaking thoroughbred racehorses for his dad, is an avid polo player with his own string of polo ponies. He enjoyed a chance to ride and see his siblings.

Others who came out enjoyed the fast-paced sport as well.

Elsa Maskell, who is from St. Mary's parish in Annapolis and was attending for her third year, said, "Catholic Charities is something we've always been involved in and supported. My husband's company is one of the sponsors. It's a wonderful event, something you don't get to see every day. It's nice and relaxing and it's for a great cause."

Trish Bradley and her husband, William, parishioners of St. Paul's in Ellicott City, came for the first time after their neighbor David Berger told them about it.

Berger, who is a friend of the Lewises, said he knew of their work with Our Daily Bread and wanted to come out to support them.

"I love horses," Trish said.

"We do a lot of volunteering with St. Paul's; I volunteer with Beans and Bread," added William.

“As people learn about the event, more people get involved and more people come,” McCarthy said.