

POLO FOR HEART

Polo for Heart

19 years of raising money for the Heart and Stroke Foundation

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Staff Writer

It may have started as just a fun game to raise money for a good cause but, after 19 years, the annual Polo for Heart event has grown to be one of the Heart and Stroke Foundation's largest fundraising events.

Started in 1979 by the late Col. Michael C. Sifton, who was head of the Toronto Polo Club, the event began when the club teamed with the Richmond Hill Lions Club and the women's committee of Heart and Stroke for a fundraiser, using polo as the attraction.

The first game was played on the Seneca College football field.

After two years, the event moved to the Gormley Polo Centre — boasting playing grounds the size of three football fields — and the

Aurora Lions Club joined the cause. The event was also switched from being held week nights to two weekends.

As well, plenty of entertainment has been added to make for an all-around fun day.

"It has grown to something different — it's a real day in the country," said Cliff Sifton, co-chairperson of the event. "It is really growing because there are so many things going on."

Included in this year's line-up are arts and crafts, bou-

tique, tents and a silent auction and raffle. In addition, the 48th Highlanders Pipes and Drums, the Rainbow Sky Divers, York Region's canine demonstration team, the Toronto Kite Fliers, radio-controlled plane demonstrations and a pony parade will entertain crowds.

On June 19, 20 and 27, polo games are slated for 1 p.m. and 3 p.m., and on June 21 and 28 at 11 a.m., 1 p.m. and 3 p.m. Bicycle polo is scheduled on June 20.

Admission is \$10 per day and children 12 or younger get in free.

"We try to offer so many things for only \$10," said Sifton. "It's a full afternoon of activities."

Sifton said polo itself is growing in popularity, adding the Gormley field will be a colorful mosaic as teams from

around the world sport their country's colors on their uniforms. Describing it as hockey on horses, Sifton said polo is a challenging and action-packed game.

"It's a game that's really on the rise. And people love the horses," said Sifton.

And, having raised more than \$3 million for Heart and Stroke to date, it has become one of the foundation's larger fundraisers, with no signs of letting up soon.

"We're already planning for our 20th anniversary,

and I've got our 25th anniversary in mind," Sifton said. "I'm really proud of what we've accomplished."



There will be five polo matches, a bicycle polo match, the canine demonstration team, among other things during the 19th Annual Polo For Heart.

EVENT FACT SHEET

A day in the country — picnicking, daily polo matches and entertainment for all ages.

Date: June 19, 20, 21 and June 27 and 28

Location: Gormley Polo Centre, Richmond Hill Hwy. 404 and Bloomington Side Road

Tickets: \$10 per day. Children under 12 are free.

Time: Gates open at 11 a.m. and close at 5 p.m. Polo matches begin at 1 p.m. and 3 p.m. (June 27 and 28 there is also a polo match at 11 a.m.)

Order a Picnic: A variety of picnic lunches can be purchased and delivered to the Polo Centre during Polo For Heart.

For details call Great Moments Catering at 416-431-2404.

Other things to see and do: The Rainbow Sky Divers, Bicycle Polo, 48th Highlander's Pipes and Drums, Kite Flying, boutique tent with crafts, on-site refreshments and hot dogs and hamburgers provided by Aurora Lions Club.

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