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Derby Day a winner for Pequot

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FAIRFIELD -- Mine the Bird was the big winner at Churchill Downs Saturday. The **Pequot Library** was the big winner in Southport.

Both have the annual running of the Kentucky Derby to thank.

But Derby Day at the Pequot was the first in what Graham Michener, chairman of the Pequot Contemporaries, a new group of library patrons, expects to be an annual event.

The threatening weather of early Saturday afternoon gave way to warm sunshine. That led to nearly 200 people attending the event for which they made a \$50 donation to attend or \$200 to tailgate.

The donations bought entertainment from the Corinthian Jazz Band, which performed several classics such as "My Old Kentucky Home" and the traditional "Call to the Post" bringing people into the auditorium to watch the race on a high-definition projection TV.

The event brought the opportunity to dress up in jockey silks as did William Russell, of Fairfield; or pull out the pinks or long red coats normally reserved for fox hunting that made Chester Burley and Maurice Corrigan stand out in the crowd, or even put on your best hat like Liz Frassinelli, who showcased a designer gem bought in Saratoga Springs during the Woodward Stakes last summer.

"An event like this brings so many people together," said Russell, who was pulling for Friesan Fire. He laid out a spread of Virginia ham and cheese sandwiches with music from Bill Monroe and the Blue Grass Boys sounding from the rear of his Jeep Wagoneer.

"I think it's a great time," said Frassinelli, who with her husband, David, also put out a tailgating spread. "You can forget about everything and just have fun."

The Frassinellis served up carrot cake and drinks kept cold in a 40th Anniversary Garden State raceway trophy cup before being served in official commemorative Kentucky Derby glasses marking the 112th, 113th, 114th, and 115th running of the race.

But more importantly, the event helped ease some of the library's budgetary issues.

"We're struggling to make our budget like so many others," said Daniel Snyder, the library's executive director. "The Pequot Contemporaries came up with this proposal about a month and really did a great job putting it together."

Michener sees Saturday's event as the first of what he expects to be annual Derby Days at the **Pequot Library** "as a showcase...in bringing new folks into the library community."

Snydacker also commended Salko Farms for donating hay bales for the event and Cablevision and M Communications for providing the hookup to project the race in high definition on a huge TV screen in the library's auditorium.

After Mine the Bird took home the roses, some donors walked off with their own titles.

Ruth Reilly won for best tailgater and most creative hat, Ruth Frantz took home the title for most elegant hat, and Ariane Mermod and Fairfield Bridal Trails Association were named most elegant tailgaters.

"Everyone had such a wonderful time," Snydacker said.

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