



Thomasina Poirot and Mike Poirot attended Habitat for Humanity's Garden Party.

It may have been cold and wintry outside, but inside the Cow Palace at the Maryland State Fairgrounds, it was lush and green, as Habitat for Humanity hosted a Preview Party for the Maryland Home & Garden Show. CEO Mike Mitchell warmly greeted guests for the charity's first-time event, and considered the juxtaposition of the two.

"Houses and gardens: this is where it all comes together," he said. "It brings together two worlds." "It's the flip side of what we do; take nothing and turn it into something," said Owen Rouse, board member, as he compared how Habitat builds houses for the needy outside where nothing was before, and the folks behind the show had constructed a wonderland of gardens inside what had been an empty barn.

"This is great to see all this stuff without the crowds. Did you see that fountain in the shape of a saxophone?" said Mike Brennan, board member, there with his wife Jane Sundius, Open Society Institute education director.

"I've never been to the show. I didn't know what to expect. [I like] the way they made the party feel intimate in this huge hall," said Laura Farmer, BSO public relations manager. She and Annie Harrelson, Tek Systems financial analyst, Claire Berlin, Baltimore Symphony Orchestra public relations and publications coordinator, and Bernice Coles, board member, enjoyed some wine and hors d'oeuvres before heading "out" to explore the various landscapes.

Elsbeth Haladay, Nordstrom personal stylist, and her husband Edward Haladay, board member, strolled the grounds while they and the other guests were serenaded with the sounds of babbling manmade brooks and fountains, accompanied by a string quartet.

"This is wonderful, and so relaxed," said Julie Wagner, CareFirst grants program manager.

"It gives you a glimpse of spring, because I am so done with winter," added Jane Manlove, Veterans Administration at Perry Point social worker.

"The show does makes you think of spring," noted Joe Allwein, board chair.

Janet Noone, PeoplesBank loan administrator, took that thought one step further.

"I wish [spring] was outside. But I'll take it in here," she said.

"I like the hot tubs, though," said her husband, Joe Noone, board member, with a laugh.

-- Sloane Brown