

# Neighborhoods

B3

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## Beads help lift African women out of poverty Party raises money for HIV victims

By WENDI WINTERS  
For The Capital

Call it a Tupperware party with a conscience.

On Sunday, a local resident and her sister hosted a small, elegant party for two dozen friends that helped lift the lives of several women stricken with HIV or AIDS in the slums of Kampala, Uganda.

For once, partygoers didn't have to worry about pyramid sales structures, bonus promotions, pushy sales pitches, or products that require batteries. Instead, each item a guest purchased

helped someone halfway around the globe.

Glistening on two fabric-covered tables in the host's Severn Grove home near Westfield Annapolis mall to lay dozens of beautiful, lightweight beaded necklaces, chokers and bangle bracelets. They shimmered in a variety of colors from subtle earth tones to punchy, fashion-savvy shades.

Guests milled about, watching a slide show about the BeadforLife project, listening to African music, nibbling on hors d'oeuvres made from African recipes or trying on

the jewelry.

"I read about BeadforLife home parties in the May issue of *Family Circle*, and decided to do one right away," said April Forrer, mother of youngsters Quentin, Ethan and Lilly.

Mrs. Forrer, a longtime member of the Anne Arundel Boys & Girls Clubs board, recently joined the staff as its director of operations. She's busy preparing for the opening of the club's newest chapter in the completely renovated

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Annapolis resident April Forrer and her sister Pam Bucklinger, of Arlington, Va., compare handcrafted chokers during their BeadforLife party at Mrs. Forrer's home.

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Bates High School building later this summer. Setting up the party was time subtracted from family and work, but a cause she felt was worth the investment.

She enlisted the help of her sister, Pam Bucklinger of Arlington, Va.

"Everyone likes unique jewelry," said Ms. Bucklinger. "It's a great cause, too. BeadforLife sends the merchandise and what you don't sell, you send back. Yes, you have to give them your credit card number, but they send along a postage-paid envelope to return everything."

BeadforLife party hosts like Mrs. Forrer and Ms. Bucklinger are volunteers. They are not compensated for their efforts.

"Our friends went right away for the bangle bracelets and long strand necklaces," puzzled Mrs. Forrer, who prefers the chokers that visually elongate the neck.

BeadforLife, a non-profit organization based in both Uganda and Boulder, Colo., was founded by Torokin Wakefield and her daughter, Ginny Jordan. Ms. Wakefield's husband, Dr. Charles Steinberg, went to Uganda two years ago to train AIDS doctors.

While there with her husband, Ms. Wakefield noticed a local woman was selling eye-catching, beaded jewelry. She was stunned to discover the beads were actually strips of paper, cut from discarded magazines, rolled tightly, glued and lightly varnished.

When friends began to demand jewelry just like Ms. Wakefield was wearing, she worked with her daughter to set up a bootstrap program to help raise Ugandan women and their families out of poverty, illiteracy and sickness.

Seventy-four percent of the gross proceeds from BeadforLife parties and events go directly to the 250 Ugandan women who hand craft beaded jewelry and printed cotton jewelry bags. The remaining 26 percent covers administrative costs. A necklace that sells for \$10 provides \$2 directly to its maker. An additional \$5.50 goes to the woman's community for health and education programs.

Prices at BeadforLife parties



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Katy Karkawski, an employee at the Evolutions Gym in Eastport, admires her selection of beaded necklaces during a BeadforLife party at the Annapolis residence of April Forrer.

range from \$5 for a bangle bracelet to \$50 for a large beaded purse. The organization estimates 1,600 people are being supported by BeadforLife. When involvement with BeadforLife tripled their income, dozens of the bead makers branched out into other industries, or invested in savings plans and education funds for their children.

Marie Brockhurst, a partner in the online business Weems Creek Solutions, based in Annapolis, was trying on necklaces near a large vase of fresh gladiolas.

"I'm here to support women of Uganda, to help them out of poverty," she explained holding several strands of necklaces aloft. "It's beautiful jewelry, and I can support a good cause at the same time. I'm buying two long necklaces and two short ones for a total of \$50."

Katy Karkawski, an employee of Evolutions Gym in Eastport said she really likes the cause.

"I keep hearing about the horrible things going on in Uganda and I want to help," she said

She purchased a triple

strand necklace and a bracelet, plus necklaces for her mother, sister and sister-in-law. The tab made barely a dent in her pocketbook.

David Forrer, April's husband, hovered around the ladies with a clipboard. He was the designated sales clerk and he did the task happily. His wife and mother-in-law had spent hours cleaning the house and preparing food for the guests, so his clipboard duty was a fair trade-off.

One hundred pieces sold quickly during the party, he noted. His wife will hold on to the remainder of the merchandise until July 25 and continue to sell the inventory that remains.

"She's got a heart the size of Texas," he smiled.

For further information about BeadforLife and in-home jewelry parties featuring BeadforLife items, visit the Web site [www.BeadforLife.com](http://www.BeadforLife.com). To view some of the jewelry before July 25, e-mail Mrs. Forrer at [aforrer@bgcaa.com](mailto:aforrer@bgcaa.com).

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