

It's raining men

One hundred and 70 cheering women. Fourteen eligible bachelors. The thought 'save me!' must have crossed their minds. Daunting, yes, but the good sports prevailed for a good cause.

LOKE POH LIN attends the inaugural Charity Bachelor Auction.



OOZING WITH CHARM: Dinesh Alwyn, a 21-year-old pilot, had the audience all weak-kneed.



IN THE SPIRIT: The bidding went fast and furious.



Pictures by HASRIYASAH SABUDIN

ALL HEART: These bachelors went all out for charity.

NOW I know how Geri Halliwell must have felt in her hit single, *It's Raining Men*.

Last Sunday, 14 eligible, talented and charitable bachelors put their pride on the line to help those who are less fortunate than themselves in Malaysia's first-ever Charity Bachelor Auction.

Organised by Soroptimist International Club of Petaling Jaya (SIPJ) and UK Women's Alumni Network (UKWAN), the auction was held to raise awareness and funds for the Breast Cancer Welfare Association (BCWA).

There was an added benefit too, as Regina Yau, UKWAN founder and

SIPJ member, explained: "Successful bidders also get to choose a service project on which the bachelors will devote a full weekend of their time. These include orphanages and nursing homes."

And now for the best part. Imagine 170 women confined in the junior ballroom of Nikko Hotel and getting to meet 14 good-looking, fun-loving young men with hearts in the right place.

It was heady and the ladies had a grand time cheering on their favourite bachelors as they were introduced to the floor, one by one.

Two words summed up the bachelors that Sunday afternoon: good sports. Not only did they need to make a grand entrance into a ballroom full of cheering women (it's mighty daunting, believe me), they also had to demonstrate a particular talent in front of all present before the bidding began.

The bachelors came from different professional backgrounds; there was a bakery manager (Eric Leong, 34), a restaurateur (Benjamin Yong, 29), a pilot (Dinesh Alwyn, 21), a fashion designer (Eric Choong, 43), an entrepreneur (Ken Lim, 36), captain of Malaysia's ice hockey team (Gary Tan, 28), an events manager (Carliff. Ridzwan Carleel, 26), an interior designer (Ivan Kom, 33), an engineer-turned-marcomm manager (Erman Akinci, 25), property communications



MUM'S THE WORD: Eric Choong's tickled with his mum's show of support.

manager (Soon Teck Giap, 39), a property company manager (Tan Joon Kai, 35), a magazine editor (William Kee, 33), an orthopaedic specialist (Dr Shamsul Iskandar Hussein, 33) and a journalist (Michael Cheang, 30).

From the wonderful to the affectionate, the bachelors displayed their talents and some even managed to raise more money by selling hugs and kisses.

Erman Akinci juggled, Eric Choong sang a Teresa Teng number, Tan Joon Kai played the violin, Carliff Ridzwan danced and Benjamin Yong iced 20 cupcakes in a minute and 20 seconds.

The MC, Joanne Kam Poh, added a great deal to the hilarity of the event with her ribald sense of humour.

In fact she was also "auctioned off" at the end of the evening, something which she took in her stride with a lot of grace.

When it came to the auction proper, the ladies got into the spirit of things pretty quickly, eased along by the professional services of Christie's Lim Meng Hong.

For her pains and the concerted efforts of the committee and the bachelors, RM75,000 was raised.

This sum included proceeds from the sale of tables for the function and pledges. The auction also raised more than 200 hours of volunteer time from the bachelors.

And so 14 of KL's most charitable bachelors won many hearts that day, at the same time helping to raise awareness and funds for the BCWA.

It will be no understatement to say that the women themselves were the ones who enjoyed themselves most while at the same time contributing to this charitable cause.