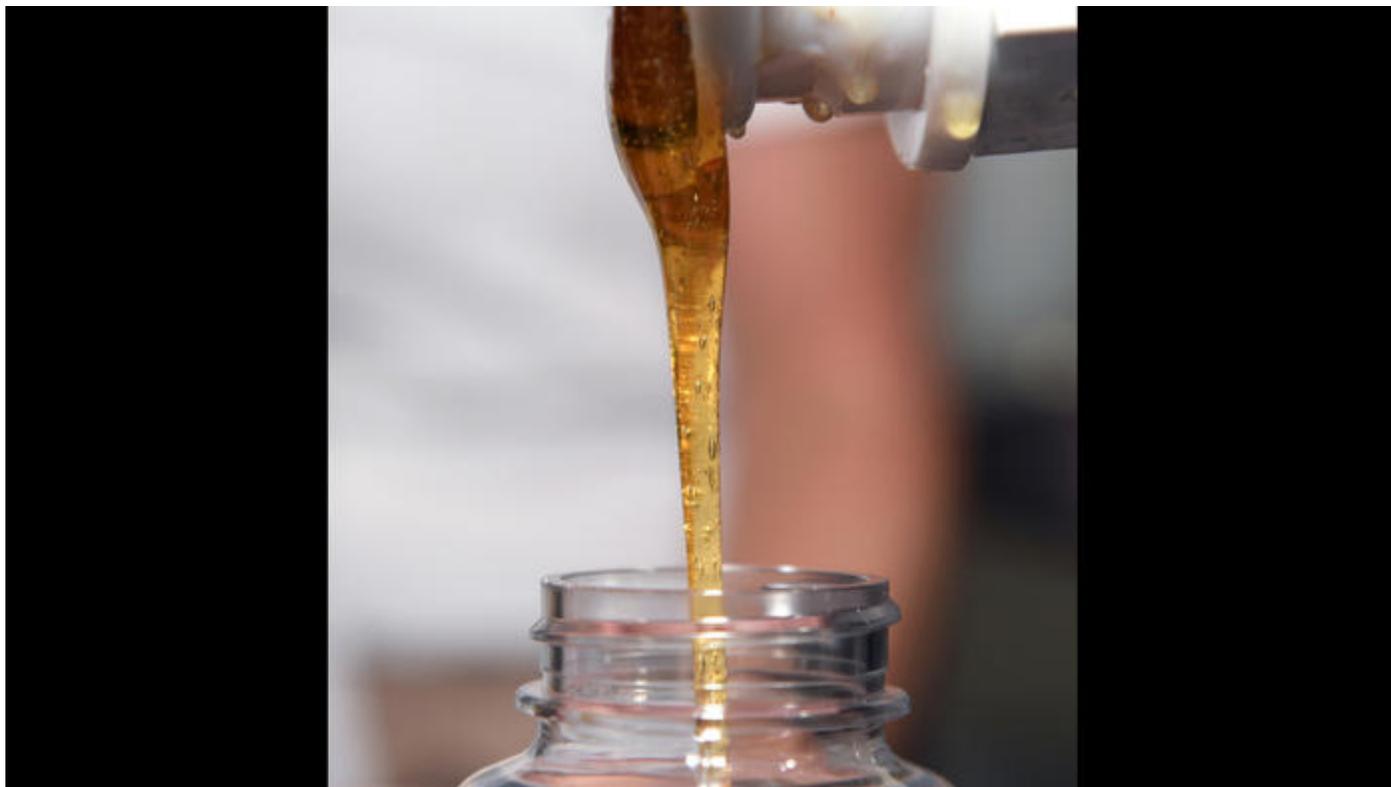


Honey for charity: Roland Park beekeepers harvest 1,200 jars from local hives



Residents of Roland Park harvest honey from beehives.



By **Colin Campbell** · **Contact Reporter**
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The stickiest, most labor-intensive part of harvesting honey is also the most satisfying to watch.

A wooden frame covered on both sides with thick, sticky honeycomb is balanced over a large bucket, and the harvester carefully shaves off a thin top layer with a knife, exposing the viscous, golden liquid beneath.

Neighbors, friends and family members took turns carving the honeycomb in Dr. Doug Clemens' Roland Park backyard garage Sunday. The 58-year-old Clemens, a pediatric dentist, and his family are in their fifth year of producing "C's Bees Honey," which they harvest from 14 man-made hives around the neighborhood and six at Sagamore Farm in Reisterstown.

Last year, he said, they produced 1,000 one-pound jars of honey and won an award at the Maryland State Fair. This year, they expect an even larger haul, about 1,200 jars.

"Beekeeping is not labor-intensive," said Tim Askew, another local beekeeper who participates in the annual event. "But for the honey harvest, you need a lot of hands."

Clemens and his friends are among nearly 70 registered beekeepers in the city and 1,895 across the state, according to the Maryland Department of Agriculture.

Once the honeycomb's outside sealing — known as the "cap" — is removed, the syrupy frames are dropped into a centrifuge in a large vat. The centrifuge spins the frames at high speed, removing the honey, which the beekeepers then pour through one or two strainers before it is ready to be tipped into jars.

The project began as a service project in 2011, when Clemens' son, Conrad, was preparing for his Bar Mitzvah. Clemens' wife, Dr. Tonie Kline, is the longtime medical director for the Cornelia de Lange Syndrome (or CdLS) Foundation, which supports families and caretakers of people with the genetic disease. The father and son decided to learn beekeeping and sell honey to benefit the foundation.

They trained at a University of Maryland research lab on the Eastern Shore and at Oregon Ridge in Cockeysville. After six two-hour classes, they were ready to go.

Their initial attempts were modest, according to Conrad Clemens, now a 17-year-old senior at the Gilman School.

"At first it was not impressive," he said. "It was hard to get started. It gets better every year."

The effort raised more than \$4,000 for the charity last year, said Kline, a pediatric geneticist. Kelly Brown, the acting director of the CdLS Foundation, was surprised at first by the idea.

"It's amazing how dedicated they are," she said, "that they can make honey, sell it and raise thousands of dollars for the foundation."

The bees have a 45-day life span, during which time they produce about 1/12 of a teaspoon of honey each. Depending on the size, a hive can house about 50,000 to 100,000 bees.

Bill Voluse, 64, a retired UPS driver who lives in Linthicum, is fascinated by their selfless, group mentality.

"The most impressive thing about bees is they exist for the colony, and the colony alone," Voluse said.

In a corner of the garage, Debbie Dwyer, 49, of Lutherville, and Rachel Beck, 39, of Roland Park, carefully filled jars from large vats with the finished product.

Dwyer said she takes a teaspoon of the local honey regularly in the spring to ward off seasonal allergies. The bees in her yard have made her flowers more vibrant and healthier. The beekeepers are strong opponents of

pesticides, which, some say, can infect and kill whole hives.

Clemens keeps the honeycomb frames in his garage over the winter until he sees the first flowers bloom in early spring. The hives, with the frames stacked on top of each other, resemble wooden chests of drawers. He puts the frames in one at a time, allowing the bees to fill the first one with honeycomb before adding a second and third.

Add the frames too quickly and other pests will infiltrate the uppermost ones before the bees can populate them. Wait too long, and the bees will swarm to another hive. He checks on their progress every few weeks.

"It's just fun to see the nature of the honeybee process," Clemens said. "It's amazing."

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