

Local fundraising benefits Ethiopian orphans

BY ANDREA COX, CALGARY HERALD MAY 3, 2013



A calendar featuring oil paintings of Ethiopian natives is being sold in support of local charity HOPEthiopia, which works to improve the lives of the more than 4.5 million orphans in Ethiopia and Rwanda.

Photograph by: HOPEthiopia

Artist Paul Van Ginkel and longtime friend and art collector Pat Ward, CEO of Painted Pony Petroleum, have partnered for the second year to create a fundraising calendar in support of local charity HOPEthiopia.

The 2013 calendar, comprising a dozen visually stunning watercolour images of Ethiopians, was inspired by photographs taken on HOPEthiopia's mission trips.

“The HOPEthiopia team has an incredible archive of very powerful portraits of the people, many of whom they know personally. They are just gorgeous — like something out of National Geographic,” says Van Ginkel.

Founded by Calgarians Melaku Kassaye, Ralph Dubiensi and Wayne King, HOPEthiopia’s goal is to improve the lives of Ethiopians, in particular orphaned children.

“We believe that the orphans are the greatest resource of the country,” says Dubiensi, adding there are more than 4.5 million orphans in the country due to war, famine, disease, drought and HIV/AIDS.

The charity has purchased leaseholds on lands in the Oromia Region, putting emphasis on four main areas: water, education, health care and reforestation.

“Deforestation is a massive problem — the forestation has declined to three per cent of the country from 30 per cent in recent years,” he says.

HOPEthiopia is also building a housing facility with its own water system for orphans and seniors just outside the town of Harbu Chulule.

“We drilled a well purely on faith and we hit water big time,” says Dubiensi, adding the supply fills a 10,000-litre tank in an hour.

The housing facility will comprise several dome-shaped homes built in pods of seven homes (six of the homes will house orphans and mothers and the seventh will house seniors). There will be 35 homes in total, with the first opening this July.

The homes will feature sustainable gardens tended by the residents, and plans are in the works for a community hall and school.

For the team at HOPEthiopia, health care is also of primary importance. Dubiensi, a dentist, has organized cataract surgeries in Ethiopia working with one of the country’s 20 cataract surgeons.

“Cataracts and trachoma are a huge problem. Adults 45 or older have a 70 per cent chance of getting cataracts,” says Dubiensi.

To date, HOPEthiopia has facilitated over 150 surgeries.

“It’s the most amazing thing. We take someone who is completely blind and restore their sight. It’s wonderful.”

HOPEthiopia is in the process of training other health-care specialists in the country to perform the surgeries.

And education is also a primary focus for the charity, which has two NGOs — one in Ethiopia and one in Rwanda. Last year, they lobbied the government to open the high school to grades 11 and 12 (school typically goes to Grade 10).

“We had to open up an IT lab with computer equipment and we are taking these students to meet corporate Ethiopia — so for the first time they can see the possibilities.”

Van Ginkel’s and Painted Pony’s collaborative fundraising initiative has raised almost \$200,000 over the past two years, and has helped create a legacy for orphaned children in the African countries of Ethiopia and Rwanda.

“Considering that the average African makes \$2 per day, you can imagine how far this money goes,” says Van Ginkel.

Dubienski elaborates.

“It costs \$18 to restore someone’s sight. To sponsor a family, including food and education, it’s \$35 for a mom and three or four children. The money goes a long, long way.”

The real cost comes in building a home — each domed house will cost approximately \$13,000 and will be outfitted with solar panels for full sustainability.

“Electricity is a huge problem here — the solar power will alleviate those issues.”

To make a donation to HOPEthiopia through purchasing a calendar and to find out more information about the charity, please visit: hopethiopia.com. Calendars can also be purchased online at paintedpony.ca.

Paul Van Ginkel’s original paintings are for sale in his new Inglewood gallery (paulvanginkel.com) and a proceed of each sale will go toward HOPEthiopia.

“This project definitely has legs and we are going to do it again next year,” says Van Ginkel, who has plans to travel with one of HOPEthiopia’s mission groups to Ethiopia in the fall.

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The Alberta Hospice Palliative Care Association (AHPCA) has launched a new and comprehensive online resource directory for hospice and palliative care services in Alberta in recognition of National Hospice Palliative Care Week.

The goal of hospice palliative care is to relieve suffering and improve the quality of life for patients and families who are living with or dying from advanced illness or are bereaved.

“During this very vulnerable time in their lives, many Albertans feel isolated and uninformed,” says Sharon Barrette, executive director at AHPCA, adding often those going through this process are not aware of the options.

“This new directory will make it easier for patients and their families to find out what programs are available in their community.”

To access the directory, visit directory.ahpca.ca.

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As part of a campaign called Help Us Feed the Hope, Catelli pasta will donate a serving of pasta to Calgary food banks for every box purchased by Calgary residents until the end of June.

In addition, Catelli pasta is launching the cookbook *Gourmet Family Meals for Under \$10*, which can be downloaded free of charge on the Catelli pasta Facebook page.

For every “share” of the recipes on Facebook, Catelli pasta will donate an additional serving of pasta to families in need.

“Pasta is one of the most versatile products that can be easily combined with healthy and nutritious ingredients, while being a fun dish for the whole family at the same time,” said Chef Andrew Springett, Chef Instructor at Calgary-based SAIT Polytechnic School of Hospitality and Tourism, who contributed a Minestrone Ragout recipe to the cookbook.

The goal is to set a record donation of 200,000 servings of pasta to Western Canadian food banks, and a total of one million servings of pasta across Canada, Kim explained.

To participate in the Help Us Feed the Hope campaign, visit facebook.com/catelli or purchase Catelli pasta at Co-op stores from now until the end of June.

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If you or someone you know is involved in an act of giving, please let us know by sending an e-mail to Andrea Cox at livingbetter2@yahoo.ca.