

Parker: Painted Pony give Hope to Ethiopia



DAVID PARKER, CALGARY HERALD

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Published on: November 8, 2016 | Last Updated: November 8, 2016 6:00 AM MST



Artist Paul Van Ginkel and Patrick Ward, president of Painted Pony Petroleum display the HOPEthiopia calendar being sold for charity. *LEAH HENNEL / LEAH HENNEL/POSTMEDIA*

Calgary-based Painted Pony Petroleum Ltd. is a publicly traded company focused on the

development of natural gas and natural gas liquids in the Montney formation of northeast British Columbia.

President and CEO Patrick Ward says he's been blessed to build a business in a country rich with resources and home to a stable government. And, like many Calgary companies, Painted Pony celebrates its successes with a strong commitment to look after those less fortunate.

On Thursday, for a sixth year, the company will hold its annual Christmas event for associates and friends at the Ranchmen's Club, where guests will be encouraged to buy a special charity calendar.

The calendar is distributed, for a minimum \$25 donation, in aid of HOPEthopia. The fundraiser has collected more than \$600,000 since the first calendar, featuring the art of Calgary's Paul Van Ginkel, was released in 2012.

Ward was born on the military base at Goose Bay, Labrador, where his father served as a commissioned officer. The family was transferred to Calgary a year later and Ward grew up with the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry at Currie Barracks.

The family later moved to the community of Palliser, where Ward says he had the largest Herald route in the city — 137 newspapers. He attended E.P.

Scarlett and went on to the University of Calgary to earn a geology degree.

After working at Pacific 66, Petro-Canada and Total Petroleum, Ward delved into the world of junior oil and gas companies and was a co-founder of Chowade Energy, the business named after the B.C river where it was working.

But Chowade is not an easy name to spell or pronounce so Ward turned to childhood memories of enjoying the family's 50 acres south of Priddis and Painted Pony became the company's recognized name.

Paintings and sculptures of horses are displayed throughout its downtown office, many of them produced by Van Ginkel including a large commissioned piece in the boardroom; a horse team pulling a stagecoach that bears the company's TSX symbol.

Ward's interest in HOPEthiopia is a result of his friendship with Ralph and Glenda Dubiensi, who founded the charity with Melaku and Selam Kessaye and Wayne and Cindy King.

Melaku is an Ethiopian who works at Masters Academy where Glenda was a counsellor. When he shared his dream of helping his people back home, Glenda travelled there with her husband Ralph, a dentist, to discover a land and people that have had to withstand terrible wars and disasters and, in more recent generations, the epidemic of HIV/AIDS.

The couple have now spent 20 years in the region and HOPEthiopia has provided care to orphaned children and seniors, and with a gift of 4,000 acres from a former president who is grateful for the charity's many efforts. It has built a self-employment training centre and organized medical clinics there. The Kelly Drader Centre in Rwanda — named in memory of a former director of Painted Pony — is managed by Glenda Dubiensi who spends half of each year in Kigali helping empower Rwandese youth.

Painted Pony covers all of the cost of producing the calendars and matches all donations. Van Ginkel provides the equine art for the calendars, but this year the cover is his portrait of an Ethiopian girl, titled Eyes of the Innocent, that will be auctioned off at this week's event.

News and notes

Calgary-based MNP, already one of Canada's largest national accounting and business consulting firms, is about to get even bigger. Effective Jan. 1, it will complete a merger with Halifax-based WBLI, that region's largest independent and full-service firm of chartered professional accountants, consisting of 11 partners and 70 professional and administrative staff.

The merger will allow MNP to offer its services from coast to coast, with WBLI joining its network of more than 65 offices and 4,000 team members.

David Parker appears Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. Read his columns online at calgaryherald.com/business. He can be reached at 403-830-4622 or by email at info@davidparker.ca