

For Immediate Release

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Local grassroots charity making a splash with Valentine's Day Gala Fundraiser

Calgary, AB - It all started when Calgary couple Janet and Harold Pliszka, along with their friend Mona Csada, were on vacation in 2004 in Tanzania. They were struck by life in Africa that so contrasted with their reality back home. They were especially moved by the young Tanzanians they met who so wanted the chance to go to school, but simply didn't have the means to afford it. Though most developing countries provide free primary education, secondary schooling is beyond the household incomes of so many in East Africa and elsewhere.

They knew they had to do something. So back in Calgary, Harold and Janet, together with a small group of volunteers, started HYTES (Helping Youth Through Educational Scholarships) in 2005. This non-profit organization provides scholarships for financially challenged and community minded youth in developing countries.

Using their basement office as their headquarters, the Pliszka's have watched HYTES grow. The registered charity has a team of capable volunteers in Calgary and Edmonton and board of directors including Csada who believe in the cause. The charity now awards at least 150 scholarships per year to eligible students in developing countries including Guatemala, Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia and Uganda. So far over 270 students have benefitted from HYTES.

The grassroots organization has been getting noticed for its efforts. It was awarded a \$25,000 grant from the Wild Rose Foundation in February 2008 and \$3,000 in January 2009 from the MacEwan Global Education Fund. In fall 2008, HYTES was nominated for a YMCA Calgary Peace Medal in the "International Group" category.

Now they're likely to get a lot more attention at a sexy Valentine's Day fundraiser called **Turn On Calgary** being held at Hotel Arts beginning at 7pm on February 14, 2009. HYTES has held smaller fundraisers in the past in both Calgary and Edmonton, but this gala event is the biggest and most extravagant undertaking so far for this up and coming charity.

"We were ready to take HYTES to the next level and so we came up with the idea for Turn on Calgary," explains Harold Pliszka, HYTES co-founder and president. "This event is about sharing the love – meaning it's the perfect place to take a date on Valentine's Day and at the same time, support a good cause by helping kids get an education."

This gala fundraiser will feature live music performed by local jazz band, Round Midnight as well as sexy drinks, sumptuous tapas served at chef attended stations and a lavish silent auction. Tickets are \$125 and are available online at www.turnoncalgary.org or by phone at 403-291-9812.

HYTES is 100 per cent volunteer run and 88 per cent of all funds raised go directly to students. The remaining 12 per cent covers necessary program costs like money transfer fees and in country expenses.

For more information please contact Harold or Janet Pliszka at 403-252-7971.