



MEDIA RELEASE

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LOCAL CHARITY PREMIERES NEW DVD & CHILD SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM

PETERBOROUGH – Local charity Friends of Honduran Children launched an enhanced child sponsorship program featuring a new promotional DVD starring CBC TV's Jessica Holmes at Cinema 379 today.

An enhanced new child sponsorship program will allow Canadians to help rescue one of the thousands of abandoned or orphaned children struggling for survival in Honduras. Building on previous sponsorship efforts, the program will build what the charity refers to as a "safety net of supporters' for orphaned or abandoned children in the care of the organization's Honduran partner, Sociedad Amigos de los Niños. "Friends volunteers have been quietly sponsoring Honduran children for a long time but we'd never formalized or promoted the program," said Dr. Jim McCallum, President. "We decided the time had come to give everyone an opportunity to experience the feeling of making a real difference in the life of an innocent child."

For \$30.00 per month or \$360.00 per year, individuals or families work in partnership with three other Canadian sponsors. Their combined support feeds, clothes and houses a sponsored child. It also ensures they receive an education, vocational training and life skills, individualized and loving care, and medical and dental treatment, "By structuring our sponsorship program this way, we can cover the total cost associated with raising each child without overburdening sponsors," said McCallum.

Plans to promote the new program required the production of a DVD. Offering to lend her support to the project, actress Jessica Holmes, one of the stars of CBC-TV's Royal Canadian Air Farce, volunteered to travel to Honduras to spend four days filming in some of the poorest regions of the poverty-stricken nation. "We were thrilled to have Jessica working with us on this project," said McCallum. "Not only does she share our concern for the desperate children of Honduras, she shares our dedication to doing something tangible to improve their quality of life."

While filming the DVD with local filmmakers Eric Harris and Brenda Beck, Holmes and her fellow volunteers witnessed firsthand some of the horrors Friends works to eradicate such as children living and eating in garbage dumps, toddlers incarcerated with their mothers, and the extreme poverty that is prevalent throughout the countryside. "Visiting sites like the Tegucigalpa dump where many children eat,

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sleep and work was a shocking experience,” says Holmes. “I was suddenly struck by the knowledge that this was it for them – they’d never play in a park, go to school, or have any kind of a normal childhood. They’ll likely never live anywhere but this dump.”

The group’s travels in Honduras also included some happy experiences, however, including a visit to the one of the communities of homes supported by the child sponsorship program. “From a block away we could hear children laughing and playing,” said Holmes. “When we walked through the gates, we were rushed by about 30 children, smiling and excited to show us around their home. They were just so proud.”

Her experience even prompted Jessica to sponsor a child she met while visiting. Eight-year-old Gabriella had been brought to the orphanage by her mother just four weeks before. “I was happy to learn that many sponsors stay in touch with the children they sponsor through letters,” said Holmes. “This means a lot to me since I would love to act as a mentor to Gabriella through correspondence.”

Friends of Honduran Children is a non-profit, volunteer-driven and grass roots organization based in Peterborough. Working with Sociedad, Friends provides the necessary aid, supplies and skills to help the impoverished children of Honduras to break the cycle of poverty which controls their lives and become independent, self-reliant, contributing adults. Using a broad approach to solve the problem one Honduran child at a time, Friends builds sustainable programs like their well known Medical Brigades, rather than quick-fix band-aid solutions. For more information on the Friends of Honduran Children, visit www.honduranchildren.com.

- 30 -

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