

A Special Thank You from Stephen Lewis

I must admit that when I first learned about this idea of having people across the country take on personal dares, I was skeptical. The word 'dare' conjured images in my mind of outrageous silly pranks being performed for the gratification of others, but with no real purpose behind it.

My colleagues at the Foundation assured me that I was wrong, and that **A Dare to Remember** would be meaningful and memorable. And they were right.

This was our first-ever nationwide fundraising campaign and it is your support, creativity, and passion that made it memorable. You are joined by thousands of Canadians who did their own dares or pledged their support for other people's dares. I personally can't thank you enough for your involvement.

It was quite remarkable to watch this idea spread from city to city, and from province to province. Every week I read with great interest about all of the unique and meaningful dares you carried out. I'll mention just a few: one 12 year-old boy dared to stop biting his nails (something that I will never achieve in my lifetime); a Toronto doctor shadowed nurses during a hospital shift to better understand their invaluable work; a professor at Simon Fraser University dressed up as a different superhero every day for a week and rallied all of her students to do dares of their own; the Katimavik Group in P.E.I performed Michael Jackson's 'Thriller' dance all over the city....and the list goes on.

A Dare to Remember demonstrated that when people are motivated to come together behind a common cause, great things happen. That same sense of community spirit is seen every day in the work of African grassroots organizations.

Take Ripples International in Kenya, for example. They provide assistance to families affected by HIV and AIDS, and their support literally saves lives. One young woman named Carol was 7 when she lost her mother to AIDS. She went to live with her grandmother and became gravely ill. It became clear she was living with HIV. A neighbour suggested they contact Ripples

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International and the contribution they made to Carol's life is nothing short of miraculous. Ripples got her on antiretroviral treatment and visited her regularly in her home after she was released from hospital. They provided Carol's grandmother with food support and gave her a goat to help her earn a small income. They paid for Carol's school fees, taught her about HIV prevention and trained her as a peer counsellor for other youth. Today, Carol is 19 and dreams of becoming a doctor. "Ripples has been my mum and dad," she says. "I thank them, and my grandmother, for not giving up on me."

Ripples is just one of hundreds of community-based organizations funded by the Stephen Lewis Foundation. Last year, we were able to reach more than 200,000 children who were orphaned or made vulnerable by HIV/AIDS. In the next five years we hope to reach one million children.

The funds you raised through **A Dare to Remember** brought us one step closer to that goal. It means the world for children like Carol. If we can inspire more Canadians like you to get behind this cause, we will turn the tide of AIDS at the grassroots in Africa.

With deepest thanks,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stephen Lewis". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Stephen" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Lewis".

Stephen Lewis
Chair, Stephen Lewis Foundation

P.S. – **A Dare to Remember** was so successful this year that we are determined to make this an annual event. I encourage you to start thinking of your dare for 2010!