

"HOP, STiTCH, and JUMP": Mission Statement

We are a group of individuals from different backgrounds who have come together to raise awareness about the HIV-AIDS pandemic and its impact on both communities and individuals. We are also committed to raising funds to support grass-roots projects that alleviate suffering and provide hope to those afflicted with the disease.

HOP'N'CLOTH
www.hopncloth.org



We have been inspired by much that is positive and life-affirming, in particular creative and artistic expression, which connects people and gives hope within contexts of despair. As concrete examples, we cite hopncloth.org, inspired the **Kopanang Women's Group** (from the South African townships of Tskane and Geluksdal), which has tapped into women's creativity and life-giving energies (especially in the form of papermaking and fabric art) to transform voicelessness and lethargy into awareness, self-sufficiency, and hope. We also look to **Themba Kunene**, who brought the art of gumboot dancing from Soweto to Vancouver in the 1980s. Finally, many of us believe that such strategies are useful and meaningful ways to nurture empathy and kindness in our world.

What links us is our love of (and involvement in) the arts and our view that **art can encourage, inspire, educate, and build community**. In addition, we see the need for adolescents and young adults (here in Toronto and elsewhere) to learn more about the relationships between the global spread of HIV-AIDS, their responsibility as global citizens to care for each other, and their own personal responsibility in preventing the disease.

"HOP, STiTCH, and JUMP": What we will do:

Specifically, our goal is to organize a public performance (or performances) in support of AIDS awareness. This year's gala performance will be held at the AI Green Theatre on June 18 2007 and will feature gumboot dancing, as well as displays of fabric art. All funds raised will be earmarked for the Stephen Lewis Foundation, an internationally renowned organization that funds community-based initiatives supporting women, orphans, grandmothers, and associations of people living with HIV/AIDS.

The pre-performance preparation for this event will involve a series of educational workshops within Toronto schools. These workshops will focus on three main areas:

- 1) teaching gumboot dancing to adolescents (invented by black South African miners under apartheid, gumboot dancing is fast-paced and rhythmic, rubber gumboots marking the beat and creating a distinctively upbeat, percussive style);
- 2) teaching and working with adolescents on fabric art projects (embroidery, painting, etc.);
- 3) educating adolescents about the realities of HIV-AIDS (causes, prevention strategies, responsibilities of the individual and community, global implications).

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