



MEDIA RELEASE

THE COURAGE BROTHERS' POLAR BEAR DIP MAKES LIFE BETTER IN RWANDA

Fresh water wells and reservoirs reduce the need for human pipe lines

November 12, 2009, OAKVILLE – Todd and Trent Courage, founders of the annual Courage Brothers' Polar Bear Dip for World Vision, visited Rwanda this past summer and saw firsthand how donations to The Courage Brothers' Polar Bear Dip have made life better in Rwanda.

This year, the January 1st tradition will be the 25th anniversary of The Courage Brothers Polar Bear Dip, Canada's largest charitable dip raising money to support fresh water projects in developing countries around the world, providing solutions which improve quality of life. To date, this event has raised over \$420,000 – last year alone it raised over \$55,000.

"Visiting Kahi, Rwanda and seeing life there with my own eyes has changed everything for me," says Todd Courage. "The image of watching hundreds of children carrying big yellow buckets full of water, walking literally miles to bring it back to their towns and villages, has been permanently etched in my mind – it's like a human pipeline."

Due to persistent droughts in the Umutara region of Rwanda, the majority of the population has been left without reliable access to safe water. According to a recent survey, two thirds of the population relies on contaminated water collected from shallow hand-dug wells, swamps and ponds. As a result, hundreds of children regularly suffer from recurring water-borne diseases such as diarrhea, intestinal worms and painful skin rashes.

"In North America, it's all about convenience, as we can access clean water with ease -- a mere turn of a tap or twist of a cap – but in Rwanda, accessing clean water is all about survival," observes Todd. "Everyday, every child devotes large chunks of time walking miles to waterholes (waterholes that are often polluted), because if they didn't, they would die."

Due to HIV/AIDS and genocide, life in Rwanda is very different than life here in Canada. For instance, it's not the dads that are the heads of the majority of households, it's the children. Among other factors, malnutrition impacts 45 percent of the population, and with an average life span of 45 years, the population is young. And one of the major underlying factors that affect their ability to have healthy lives is access to clean water.

"Water is the essence of life – it prevents disease and sustains life" says Trent Courage. "And this is the reason for The Courage Brothers Polar Bear Dip for World Vision and why 500 crazy people jump into the icy-cold waters of Lake Ontario every January 1; it's water for water."

Funds raised at the 24th and 25th annual Courage Brothers' Polar Bear Dip events will help provide a dependable source of clean water for the people of Kahi in the Umutara region of Rwanda. By drilling new wells and building reservoirs, the Kahi Water Project will bring safe water close to the people who live in the community. The new water system will reduce the suffering caused by drinking dirty water and save children hours of wasted time, which can now be spent at school.