

## Concert to raise funds for Stouffville Igoma partnership

Joining hands ....  
.... creating hope

By Nancy Hopkins  
Stouffville Free Press

When Justin Kerswill returned from Igoma, Tanzania in the summer of 2005 he knew his life had changed forever.

He had travelled to the east African town as part of a mission group from the Stouffville Igoma Partnership (SIP), a local humanitarian effort trying to make a difference in the community. After witnessing firsthand the poverty and disease that is everyday life for Tanzanians, the local musician decided he would spread the word and do what he could for the people he had come to know during his month long trip.

Together with fellow musicians and artists, he created The Arts for Africa Free Benefit Concert scheduled for May 27 (rain date June 3). Between 1 and 5 p.m. Stouffville's baseball diamond and pavilion in Memorial Park will come to life with musical performances ranging from blues and jazz to Celtic, soft rock, folk and a musical children's show.

Featured bands include Brian O'Sullivan and Allison von Criegern, Gypsy Grass, Carys and Friends, Son, and Zealand. The day also includes an art show, face painting and a wide assortment of food. The many ven-

dors and artists involved have generously donated a portion of their proceeds from the day to benefit SIP's efforts.

Each day between 35 and 40 people visit a clinic in Igoma built by SIP and its many volunteers. There the medical staff spend most of their



Justin Kerswill (left) and Ron Elliott (right) take a break with a young friend in Igoma, Tanzania, during their visit to the community last summer as part of the Stouffville Igoma Partnership.

time treating malaria and infections and assisting with healthy births. An eye clinic distributes glasses. The next major project for SIP is the installation of a filtration system to purify Igoma's water supply.

Fundraising is a crucial component in keeping projects running. In addition to The Arts for Africa Concert and their annual involvement in the Strawberry Festival, SIP volunteers are working on an early

October Fundraising Dinner Auction to be held at EastRidge Missionary Church. Last April's event raised \$36,000.

SIP Secretary Nancy Clark hopes that the SIP initiative can be "a true town collaboration." Anyone who wants to be part of the program can donate time, money or items for auction, or sponsor a table at the October dinner. SIP also needs volunteers in the community of Igoma, particularly people with medical backgrounds, engineering know-how with regards to water, or teaching experience.

Ms Clark says Whitchurch-Stouffville has been very generous with donations, but paying for and successfully delivering the goods has been a challenge. Assistance from the shipping industry would make a real difference to their efforts. Child sponsorship is also needed. To date 63 Igoma children have benefited from monthly sponsorships.

Anyone who wants more information on participating in this partnership can contact Ms Clark at 905-640-1102. Further details can be found on their website at [www.sippartnership.org](http://www.sippartnership.org). Be sure to mark the May 27 Arts for Africa Free Benefit Concert on your calendar.

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