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### **Toronto Festival Provides Platform for Young Songwriters to Shine**

Toronto, ON—If you have musical teens, you may want to mark October 14th on your calendar. That will be the day that a parade of talented youth will be singing and picking guitars to their own compositions at Hugh's Room for an all-ages audience. And all funds raised will go toward helping poor children in Laos and India.

It's all part of the Toronto Songwriters' Festival, which debuted to a full house last year with some of the city's top acoustic musicians. This year, the festival has been expanded to include youth.

“Our concept was to create a festival that would provide a platform for those truly talented musicians who aren't signed with any big labels,” explains festival co-founder Shawn Phelps, “while also raising money for our children's education projects in Laos and India.”

“Even though last year's event was successful, it felt like something was missing,” Phelps says. “We realized it was young people! They are the ones who are really going to change the world, and why not start with their own music?”

Sunday's youth event is being held in partnership with School Alliance of Student Songwriters (SASS), which is run by two seasoned musicians: former songwriter and guitarist for The Guess Who, Dale Russell, and teacher and musician, Artemis Chartier. Saturday's event is being held in partnership with Songwriters' Unite, a collective of over 400 songwriters run by Russell Leon.

Saturday night's event will feature top acoustic musicians performing original compositions, including Joshua Bartholomew, Kat Goldman, Andy Carey, Tucker Finn, MEAStars and Peter Verity. CityTV's Jojo Chintoh will be returning to kick off the event. Patrons can shop for exotic art and gifts at the silent auction.

Sunday afternoon's event will feature youth performing their original compositions: Lindsay Broughton, Joey and Cierra MacDonald, Lindsay Regan, Justin Bridgemohan and Tafari-I Davis. A guest appearance will be made by Dale Russell and Artemis Chartier.

The festival was created by Toronto-based charity Jai Dee (Good Heart) Children's Fund (JDCF) to raise money for their children's literacy projects in Laos and India. Last year they raised \$8,000 and helped over 400 children.

JDCF was founded by Shawn Phelps (a former magazine editor and college teacher) and Thanou Thirakul (a software developer), after a trip to Laos when they came across a local kindergarten in a shack that didn't have crayons or toilets. “It seemed like it would take so little to make a real difference there,” Phelps says. “And now that we were able to really help that school, I know for sure that it's true. It's not hard to make a difference. You just have to take that first step and believe it will all work out somehow.”

**Event Details:**

Toronto Songwriters' Festival

Venue: Hugh's Room

Dates: Saturday October 13: 8pm till late \$25 advance/\$27 door

Sunday October 14: 11am – 3pm \$10 advance/\$12 door

Tickets: Call Hugh's Room: (416) 531-6604

\*All proceeds go towards helping children in Laos and India through Jai Dee (Good Heart) Children's Fund.

For more information, including artist bios please visit:

[www.torontosongwritersfestival.com](http://www.torontosongwritersfestival.com) (info@torontosongwritersfestival.com)

[www.jaideechildrensfund.org](http://www.jaideechildrensfund.org) (info@jaideechildrensfund.org)

**Jai Dee (Good Heart) Children's Fund** is a Toronto-based charity that helps children rise above poverty through education in developing countries at the grassroots level. It is run by a Toronto couple (Shawn Phelps and Thanou Thirakul) who decided to start it after visiting a kindergarten school in Laos and realizing how little it would take to make a difference. In Thailand and Laos, to have "jai dee" means to have a good heart. [www.jaideechildrensfund.org](http://www.jaideechildrensfund.org)

**Songwriters Unite!** is a collective of 400 songwriters run by Russell Leon, a Toronto-based music teacher and musician who heads up an eponymous band. [www.songwritersunite.com](http://www.songwritersunite.com).

**SASS Canada** was founded in 2003 by Dale Russell (songwriter and lead guitarist of The Guess Who, 1983-2000) and Artemis Chartier (singer-songwriter and high school teacher) to enable young people to express their thoughts and feelings in a safe environment, to learn valuable musical and literacy skills, to develop their creativity, to build an artistic network to benefit each member personally, and carry on the tradition of great Canadian writers. [www.sasscanada.net](http://www.sasscanada.net)