



AIR CANADA

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Forty-three Canadian Grandmothers use Aeroplan Miles to Fly to Historic African Gathering on HIV/AIDS

MONTREAL, April 19 /CNW Telbec/ - Aeroplan today announced that Aeroplan and its members have donated more than 7 million miles to its Beyond Miles partner, the Stephen Lewis Foundation, to fly 43 Canadian grandmothers to the first-ever African Grandmothers Gathering in Manzini, Swaziland.

The Grandmothers will take part in the gathering this May as part of the Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign of the Stephen Lewis Foundation. They will join close to 500 African grandmothers from 12 countries for two days of workshops and discussion, then rally with some 2,000 participants for a solidarity march to draw attention to the transformative role that grandmothers play in the AIDS pandemic. Across sub-Saharan Africa, grandmothers are parenting their orphaned grandchildren in the most challenging of circumstances. Some have more than a dozen children in their care.

"We're proud to be a part of such a historic moment by helping Canadian grandmothers support their fellow African grandmothers to raise awareness of the many challenges they face," said Vince Timpano, President and Chief Executive Officer, Aeroplan. "Our members generosity has been instrumental in not only assisting the travel of the 43 Canadian grandmothers, but also in sending field representatives to visit projects across Africa, allowing more funds to reach these organizations."

Aeroplan's Beyond Miles program also supported the first Grandmothers Gathering organized by the Stephen Lewis Foundation in 2006 which brought together 300 grandmothers from Africa and Canada.

"Aeroplan Canada has been an exceptional partner in helping to make the vision of an African Grandmothers Gathering a reality," said Ilana Landsberg-Lewis, Executive Director of the Stephen Lewis Foundation. "The impact of this historic gathering will reverberate for years to come, and the solidarity between Canadian and African grandmothers has been beautifully facilitated by Aeroplan's Beyond Miles Program."

The Swaziland Gathering is being led by the African grandmothers themselves. They have created this forum to share their experiences at the frontlines of the AIDS pandemic, talk about the new challenges they are facing, and hammer out a common agenda for future action and support.

Canadian grandmothers will hear first-hand the needs and aspirations of the African grandmothers. Upon their return home, the Canadians will take those messages from coast to coast and use them to raise awareness and funds in support of their African peers.

In addition, Aeroplan will send an employee to participate in the Grandmothers Gathering experience who will communicate back to employees about the event through Twitter and a blog. Aeroplan supports its employees in getting directly involved with its charitable partners in the community and hopes to inspire employees and raise awareness of the important projects Aeroplan's Beyond Miles partners are working on around the world. To date, employees have travelled to more than 10 destinations including Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, the Philippines and Rio de Janeiro. Beyond Miles partners use Aeroplan Miles to offset costs related to travel by air as well as hotel accommodations and car rentals. Aeroplan offsets 100 per cent of carbon emissions from flights taken by Beyond Miles partners using miles donated to them via the Beyond Miles program.

About Beyond Miles

The Beyond Miles program invites Aeroplan members to join us in supporting eight Canadian charitable organizations through the donation of Aeroplan Miles including: Earth Day Canada, Engineers Without Borders-Canada, Médecins Sans Frontières Canada, Schools Without Borders, The Stephen Lewis Foundation, Veterinarians Without Borders-Canada and War ChildCanada. In addition to supporting these organizations, Beyond Miles also supports Air Canada's Kids' Horizons, a program dedicated to enhancing the quality of life of Canadian children and youth and their families. In 2009, more than 50 million miles were donated to Beyond Miles. For more information about Beyond Miles, please visit www.aeroplan.com/donate.

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