



Australian School Children Bring the Gift of Music and Hope to Bushfire Affected Communities

21 October, 2009 – The Australian Children’s Music Foundation (ACMF) has been revealed as the first grant recipient to benefit from a record-setting fundraising effort of \$860,000 by 230,000 Australian school children for SchoolAid’s Victorian Bushfire Emergency Appeal.

As one of the largest SchoolAid grant recipients, The ACMF has wasted no time in launching its ‘Music for Hope’ program for Victorian primary schools affected by the tragic bushfires, using the power of music to assist communities and schools to address the trauma many local children have experienced.

“We’re delighted to be working with The Australian Children’s Music Foundation and its unique ‘Music for Hope’ program,” said SchoolAid Founder Sean Gordon. “The outstanding fundraising results for this appeal demonstrate the collective contribution Australia’s schoolchildren can make to the recovery of fellow students in Victoria and music is a wonderful way to do this.”

Founder of The ACMF, Don Spencer OAM, said that while there has been a great deal of focus on the physical rebuilding of communities in these areas, feedback from educators suggested many of the school children were facing long-term trauma. “We know that music can assist in enabling young people to express their emotions and innermost feelings. The joy of music can provide the release and relief that is vital after such an incredible and devastating event.”

The ACMF will provide five of the worst affected primary schools with 12 month long programs involving weekly group music sessions that include participating in songwriting sessions, the opportunity to form a choir and create bands. The program will also provide free musical equipment and the opportunity to record the students’ experiences on CDs, with illustrated books to accompany their lyrics.

“Each of the schools we approached have embraced and welcomed the idea. It gives the children something to look forward to during difficult times, helping them to share their dreams and hopes. It also helps them to address fears and concerns they may have, particularly as we move into another bushfire season,” added Don.

Strathewen Primary School has been one of the first schools to sign up to the Music for Hope Program.

“Our students have faced an extremely difficult year following February 7th. Everything that was familiar has changed. We are thankful to have this type of program come to our school which otherwise would not be possible. The arts have provided a positive way for our students to express themselves.” said Jane Hayward, Principal.

“What is even more inspiring is that the Music for Hope Program has only been possible through the generosity of other Australian school children. We thank them graciously,” Ms Hayward added.

Further SchoolAid grant recipients will be announced at a special SchoolAid ‘Night of Hope’ event in Melbourne Town Hall on 22nd October.

-ENDS-

For media interviews with Ambassadors, photo opportunities or further information, please contact:

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Note to Picture Editors:

There will be a photo opportunity at Strathewen Primary School at 9.30am on Wednesday 21st October with:

- Don Spencer OAM, ACMF Founder, musician and television presenter
- Wilbur Wilde, musician and celebrity
- Ms Jane Hayward, Principal, Strathewen Primary School and two students
- Mr Craig Spry, Teacher, Cambridge Primary School (SchoolAid Donor school) and two students

Editorial Information:

About SchoolAid - www.schoolaid.org.au

Student-led philanthropy program SchoolAid, encourages schools to join together in response to times of tragedy and humanitarian need, in particular where children's capacity to attend school and learn has been affected. Through this network of support, real and genuine improvements can be made to children's educational opportunities and provide access to schooling around the world.

SchoolAid was formed in 1999 by former school principal Sean Gordon in response to the anxiety he felt as a parent and educator about the effect the major tragedies of the world were having on the minds of our children – aiming to produce hope-filled philanthropic kids, who are resilient in the face of tragedy and understand the difference they can make in their own communities and beyond. SchoolAid is part of a portfolio of ventures supported by Social Ventures Australia (SVA), an independent, non-profit organisation, which aligns the interests of philanthropists with the needs of social entrepreneurs to combat some of Australia's most pressing community problems.

About ACMF - www.acmf.com.au

The Australian Children's Music Foundation uses the power of music to inspire and enrich the lives of all Australian children and youth, particularly the disadvantaged and Indigenous. The ACMF is a charity founded by Don Spencer OAM in 2002.

About the Music for Hope Program

The ACMF music program will commence in the following schools over a minimum 12 month period

- Strathewen Primary School (relocated to Wattle Glen Primary School)
- Marysville Primary School (relocated to Taggerty Lake Primary School)
- Middle King Lake Primary School
- Chum Creek Primary School
- Yarra Glen Primary

The 12 month programs will involve:

- Conducting free weekly class group music sessions
- Creating school choirs and bands
- Providing free musical equipment
- Songwriting sessions
- The opportunity to record and illustrate the students' experiences by recording CD's and illustrating books to accompany the lyrics
- Students performing at school and community concerts
- Visits by well known artists to give the students the chance to meet their idols and give them something to look forward to and something special to remember.