

by/n z1

## COMMUNITY

# CONCERT BENEFITS STEPHEN LEWIS FOUNDATION

"Hope Rising" is more than just the name of this year's World AIDS Day Observance and Benefit Concert in Niagara.

Every year, the community response also rises for the event, says Gloria Simon-Gould, a member of the organizing committee. The funds raised and the number of people who attend the annual event, which is scheduled this year for Monday, Dec. 3 at St. Andrew's United Church in Port Dalhousie, continue to grow, said Simon-Gould.

"We have more and more people come out every year," she said. "Every year we also seem to raise a little bit more money."

The event started about seven years ago, and at the time it wasn't even meant as a fundraiser - it was all about awareness. Simon-Gould said when they made a profit, however, they decided to evolve into raising funds. Over the years they've raised about \$15,000 for the Stephen Lewis Foundation, an organization that has been raising awareness of HIV/AIDS, particularly its devastating effect on the orphaned children of Africa since 2003.

The recipe for the concert has become a successful one over the years. The group WomEnchant, which has based its entire repertoire on topics such as social justice, peace and environmental stewardship, has been a

key partner each year.

"We have a team of people who really work together to make this happen," stresses Simon-Gould. "They've been a wonderful part of this."

The community, she said, has also stepped up big with donations for the silent auction. Individuals and businesses have donated a wide variety of good quality items, including gift certificates, furniture, collectibles and more.

The event features a concert by WomEnchant at 7:30 p.m., but doors open an hour earlier with the silent auction and the opportunity to walk a labyrinth.

"It's a little bit of a spiritual journey, where can reflect on our sisters and brothers in Africa and around the world," said Simon-Gould.

She said this year they are pleased to welcome AIDS Niagara to participate in the event. The organization will have a table set up at the concert, distributing information and answering questions.

"We're very happy to have them join us, and show support locally," she said.

Tickets for the event are \$20 for adults and \$15 for seniors and students. They can be purchased in advance by calling Cindy at 905-935-7231 or they will be available at the door.