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**LEADING BAY AREA ETHIOPIAN EXPATS JOIN FORCES TO SUPPORT
CHILDREN'S EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS IN ETHIOPIA**

WORDS UNSPOKEN – WORDS READ

A Celebration of Ethiopian Cultures

featuring Wosene Worke Kosrof & Yohannes Gebregeorgis

at the Spirits in Stone Sausalito Gallery

Sausalito, CA – September 15, 2008 – Spirits In Stone proudly announces the reunion of two leading Ethiopian expats, distinguished painter Wosene Worke Kosrof, and literacy advocate and CNN Hero Yohannes Gebregeorgis, at its Sausalito gallery on October 12, 1 – 6 pm, to benefit two non-profit organizations committed to providing educational opportunities in Ethiopia, *Ethiopia Reads* and *Global Care Unlimited*.

The two men met in the Bay area almost 20 years ago and despite their different disciplines and life paths, they share a common passion for their native Ethiopia and its cultures. They now join forces through this major event, “*Words Unspoken, Words Read*,” sponsored by Spirits in Stone, www.spiritsinstone.com in an effort to raise funds to support the educational work of these non-profit organizations in Ethiopia, where, according to UNICEF, only 42.7% of people age 15 and over can read and write.

The exhibition will offer for sale world-class stone carvings by the internationally acclaimed Shona artists of Zimbabwe, contemporary abstract paintings and limited edition prints by Wosene Worke Kosrof, finely woven basketry and evocative masks from the continent of Africa. Proceeds from sales at the event will be donated to *Ethiopia Reads* and *Global Care Unlimited*.

Expressing the vigor of the written word through his artistic transformation of the Amharic script, the script system of the official Ethiopian language, Wosene Worke Kosrof is the first Ethiopian-born painter to incorporate Amharic into contemporary abstract fine art. In his works, which are in many international private collections and in the permanent collections of numerous museums, including the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art, Wosene creates a universal visual language that moves beyond conventional linguistic meanings. With his paintings of ‘word/plays’ and script images, the core elements of his work, he speaks to international audiences: to people of all cultures.

“I’ve always been tantalized by the beauty of Amharic script, by the musical sounds of its many syllables, and by the many human stories imbedded in the shape of each language character,” Wosene explained. “And, I’m always aware, as I transform these language characters into visual narratives in my paintings, of the many people not only in my country but in many parts of the world, who are illiterate. I think of them often as I paint and imagine them ‘reading’ the forms and colors of the script images that, in themselves, relate all our human stories. I imagine too that my paintings might inspire people to learn to love reading and writing, and could encourage them – through the arts – to gain literacy.”

From his vantage point, Yohannes Gebregeorgis, who worked for 13 years as a children’s librarian at the San Francisco Public Library before returning to Ethiopia, is diligently promoting literacy in his native country by building libraries and connecting children with books through the work of the non-profit organization he established, *Ethiopia Reads*, www.ethiopiareads.org. Since opening Ethiopia’s first free library for children in 2003, *Ethiopia Reads* has established nearly twenty libraries and published ten multilingual storybooks. The organization has trained scores of librarians and teachers to share the love of reading with children.

Yohannes’ quest for quality education for Ethiopian children has also led him to establish the “Ethio-American Friendship School,” a K to 10 school in the rural town of Awassa Ethiopia, especially embracing orphan, vulnerable and rural children. In partnering with *Global Care Unlimited*, a non-profit educational outreach organization, based in Tenafly, NJ, promoting youth leadership in global humanitarian service initiatives, the “Ethio-American Friendship School,” has just completed construction of a 12-room schoolhouse. “Through the hard work of our students, parents and supporters, forming our community of conscience, we have been able to raise \$65,000 so far this year, but a lot still remains to be done to reach our goal,” explains Mark Hyman, founder and president of *Global Care Unlimited*, www.globalcareunlimited.org.

“I am delighted to be back in San Francisco, the town where my sons were born and also where the idea behind *Ethiopia Reads* was born. I feel deeply grateful for the work that is being done by all our supporters in the US on behalf of the next generation of Ethiopian children,” said Yohannes.

“We are very privileged to host this rare event at our Sausalito gallery, highlighting Ethiopian cultures through the work of these two distinguished Ethiopian gentlemen who have each excelled in their respective fields, while benefiting at the same time two unique non-profit organizations promoting literacy and quality education in Ethiopia,” said Lori Austin, the Spirits In Stone Galleries Director. “Spirits in Stone has raised over 15 million dollars for non-profits over the last 30 years and we are very proud of this accomplishment. I truly encourage people to join us on October 12 for this enchanting afternoon that will do a world of good for the children of Ethiopia.”

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PHOTOS AVAILABLE TO MEDIA UPON REQUEST

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

ABOUT ETHIOPIA READS

A former political refugee, Yohannes Gebregeorgis spent 13 years as a children's librarian with The San Francisco Public Library before returning to his native Ethiopia to start *Ethiopia Reads*, which creates hope and opportunity by connecting children with books. Since opening Ethiopia's first free library for children in 2003, *Ethiopia Reads* has established nearly twenty libraries and published ten multi-lingual storybooks. The organization has trained scores of librarians and teachers to share the love of reading with children.

Yohannes' work has been celebrated by media across the world. In May 2008, Yohannes was named a CNN Hero; the cable network's story on Yohannes was broadcast to a global audience of more than 70 million. This spring, Yohannes received the Presidential Citation for International Innovation from the American Library Association. A writer and reader who was introduced to a life-long love of reading as a teenager, Yohannes' vision is to elevate Ethiopian society by exposing children to the joys, wonder, challenges and rewards that books bring.

Ethiopia Reads is a non-profit organization with offices in Denver, CO and Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Ethiopia Reads works with a global, grassroots network of volunteers who believe that all children deserve to experience the joy of reading. For more information, please visit www.ethiopiareads.org.

ABOUT GLOBAL CARE UNLIMITED

Founder of *Global Care Unlimited*, Mark Hyman, has been nurturing compassion and global citizenship in youth since the early stages of his teaching career, promoting youth leadership in global humanitarian services initiatives.

Prior to shifting his focus exclusively to Ethiopia, Mark Hyman and his students at the Middle and High Schools in Tenafly, NJ, have been actively involved in raising awareness on the global landmine problem and *Global Care Unlimited* has been an official "Public-Private Partner" with the U.S. Department of State, Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement. *Global Care Unlimited* has raised over \$60,000 toward the demining of two Bosnian villages, rehabilitation of Cambodian landmine survivors, sponsorship of a Cambodian Master Performer and class, and purchase of computers and internet access for a "Non-Formal" primary school in Phnom Penh.

In 2005, Mark took his students to a field trip to Cambodia joined by a team of Clear Path International to learn firsthand of the life and rehabilitation efforts of landmine survivors and their families. The organization has been featured by CBS network on its "Hometown Heroes" segment in 2002 and 2005. Mark has been named Teacher of the Year by Tenafly Public Schools and in 2006 he received "The Garden State Seeds of Hope Award" from the statewide publication New Jersey Monthly.

Since 2007, *Global Care Unlimited* is working exclusively on its Ethiopian School Construction Initiative in partnership with Yohannes Gebregeorgis who visited the Tenaflly Middle School in November 2007 to launch the program. Since then, the organization has raised \$65,000 to complete construction of a 12-room schoolhouse, "The Ethio-American Friendship School." For more information, please visit www.globalcareunlimited.org.

SPIRITS IN STONE

Spirits in Stone features world-class stone carvings by the internationally acclaimed Shona artists of Zimbabwe, contemporary abstract paintings of the highly esteemed Ethiopian-born painter Wosene Worke Kosrof, and pearl- and gem-studded jewelry by master artisans, such as Gellner and Zobel. Their seven California galleries, from their southernmost in Santa Barbara to their northernmost, and newest, location in Tahoe, are recognized for their high standard of craftsmanship, fine art aesthetics, and their conscientious support for artists and their local communities.

"We promote the arts of ancient cultures and pageant the creative human spirit that exists in all people. Primarily focusing on Africa, we have now expanded to embrace Asia, Australia and the Americas-all cultures that have defined and expressed their spirituality in earth's basic elements through stone," explains co-curator, Laura Ponter.

Spirits in Stone has raised over \$15 million dollars for non-profit organizations over the last 30 years. For more information, please visit www.spiritsinstone.com.

THE HUMANITARIAN PROBLEM & EDUCATIONAL CHALLENGE IN ETHIOPIA

The humanitarian problem in Ethiopia is dire. The country ranks 170 out of 177 countries on the United Nations Human Development Index. Life expectancy is 47.6 years and the annual income per person is seven hundred fifty –six dollars.

The educational challenge in Ethiopia is also bleak. Only 46 percent of children attend primary school and drops to thirteen percent attending secondary school. The average student attends 4.3 years of school.

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