

## Kenyan Boys Choir light up local 'Me To We' campaign



**By Brock Weir**

The Kenyan Boys Choir came to Aurora to put on a special show as part of the 'Me to We' Artisan Trunk show at the Catholic Education Centre last week.

The choir was founded in 2004 and quickly gained international notoriety, especially after receiving an invitation to sing at the inauguration of US President Barack Obama.

The Trunk show is part of the Me to We and Free the Children charity campaigns. Free the Children recently hired another 200 'Mamas', putting their staff up to roughly 800.

The Mamas make jewelry and other handcrafted items to sell at functions and events.

Jessica Brumsit, associate director of corporate and family operations for Me to We, said money raised goes towards supporting the women and to help bring income to their families.

Of all sales, 50 per cent goes to the women and 50 per cent goes to Free the Children.

'There are 800 'Mamas' in Kenya that have been hired by Free the Children to do this and half the money goes back to the 'Mamas' and their work and the other half goes to support Free the Children. You don't get to see this type of thing often,' said retired York Catholic District School Board director of education Sue LaRosa.

Free the Children also has their very popular Speakers Bureau and sells volunteer trips for people to go overseas to work in various communities - something LaRosa took advantage of last summer.

'I had an opportunity this summer to travel to Kenya with Free the Children and I heard the choir,' she said. 'I was offered the opportunity to bring the choir here, so I said, 'sure!' and we found a date and brought them.'

LaRosa said students and staff from YCDSB were thrilled to have an event such as this come right to them.

'It's just an opportunity for Free the Children to demonstrate and say thanks, because we have a lot of schools that contribute to Free the Children and I experienced it first hand to see the work that they do in Kenya,' she said.

As for the Kenyan Boys Choir, that was an added treat for those who attended the event. The choir is currently touring around for three months as part of the We Day Tour.

?I think this was a great way to sort of have them come back and understand how their impacts are being implemented and also have a little treat with the Kenyan Boys Choir,? said Brumsit.

?We Day is really sort of Free the Children's signature event. It's an opportunity to bring together different speakers or those that are very impacted by social change and its purpose is to raise awareness among kids that they can become agents of change globally and locally.?

Brumsit also said Free the Children offers volunteer trips for those interested.

?It's a great opportunity for people to travel overseas with their families or for youth who want to actually volunteer in the communities where Free the Children work and then the rest is artisans pieces,? she said.

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