

Sept. 29, 2003

Tom Hanks Assists World's Poor As Freeplay Foundation Ambassador



Cape Town, South Africa....The Freeplay Foundation today announced that two-time Academy Award® winner Tom Hanks has become their American ambassador. In this advocacy role, Mr. Hanks will help gain support for the Foundation in the U.S. and promote understanding of the Foundation's work. Using Lifeline radios, which do not require batteries or electricity, the Freeplay Foundation provides sustained access to information to the world's poorest populations, especially children living on their own.

"The extraordinary technology of the Freeplay Foundation's Lifeline radio can bring vital information to isolated people all over the world," said Mr. Hanks. "For example, right now there are more than 13 million children orphaned by AIDS. Most can't attend school and can't afford batteries or electricity to power a radio. The Freeplay Foundation can hand these children a lifeline to the outside world by giving access to radio programs that teach them how to

grow their small garden plots to feed themselves, take care of their chickens or goats, and prevent deadly diseases like malaria and AIDS.”

Freeplay Foundation Executive Director Kristine Pearson said, “We are deeply grateful that Mr. Hanks has chosen to serve as our American ambassador. By lending his voice in support of the most vulnerable people, especially orphans and other children living on their own, Mr. Hanks will help bring them critical, even life-saving information and education.”

In developing countries, radio is the primary means of communication. The Lifeline radio plays non-stop using wind-up energy and solar power and is the first radio ever produced solely for humanitarian use. Using a structured methodology developed by the Freeplay Foundation, radios are distributed to youth, community health workers, village chiefs, listening groups, teachers, and informal classrooms in the developing world, primarily in Africa. Recipients are trained in how to most effectively listen to radio programming and transfer knowledge they gain to others in their community.

Mr. Hanks joins humanitarian Terry Waite, who serves as the Foundation’s European ambassador. Mr. Waite is well known in the U.S. as the special envoy to the Archbishop of Canterbury in the 1980s. While negotiating the release of U.S. hostages in Lebanon, Mr. Waite was himself taken hostage, serving most of his five years in captivity in solitary confinement.

The Freeplay Foundation works in more than a dozen African countries. It is a fund seeking, U.S.-registered 501 (c) (3) tax-exempt charity. It works with governments, international agencies such as the United Nations Development Program, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and local communities. With offices in Cape Town, South Africa and London, the Foundation also enjoys charitable status in South Africa and the UK. Learn more at www.freeplayfoundation.org.

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