

# Stitching to help Africa

Funds raised to help children orphaned by AIDS.



Left to right, Tikkun Olam Gogos members Marie Henry, Donna Ornstein, Bonnie Elster and Alexis Rothschild with their tote bags.

While the African-themed fundraising evening sponsored by Tikkun Olam Gogos, VanGogos and Sisterhood of Temple Sholom, Women of Reform Judaism, to raise awareness and funds for the work of the Stephen Lewis Foundation and its Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign is sold out, community members can still contribute to the cause by purchasing a tote bag made by Tikkun Olam Gogos members.

Tikkun Olam Gogos is celebrating its first year of stitching to help Africa's grandmothers. In May of 2011, Temple Sholom Sisterhood member Marie Henry and other like-minded women founded the group under the auspices of the Stephen Lewis Foundation's Grandmothers to Grandmothers campaign.

"We Canadian grandmothers provide relief for our African counterparts who are struggling to care for their 18 million grandchildren orphaned by AIDS," explained Henry. "The Hebrew phrase *tikkun olam* refers to repairing the world, and *gogo* is Zulu for grandmother. So we are working to heal a wound in sub-Saharan Africa, one grandmother and one sewing machine at a time."

Armed with rotary cutters, beads and bolts of fabric, Tikkun Olam Gogos meets monthly to create trendy and sturdy tote bags, using nylon webbing overlaid with 100 percent cotton in a kaleidoscope of colors and designs. No two bags are exactly alike, and each features inside pockets and magnetic snap closures. The eco-friendly totes make thoughtful gifts for bridal parties, new mothers or anyone who shops. To date, the group's 22 members have made nearly 400 tote bags and raised approximately \$18,000 for the Stephen Lewis Foundation Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign.

Currently, there are more than 240 grandmothers groups across Canada. On June 21, Temple Sholom Tikkun Olam Gogos will be collaborating with another Vancouver chapter, VanGogos, to host Wine and Dine for Africa. The evening, which is sold out, will spotlight African wines and delicacies, a craft fair of Gogos products and a presentation by women who have traveled in Africa. Planning has already started for next year's second anniversary celebration.

Tote bags can be purchased at various craft fairs, or anytime at the Temple Sholom Gift Shop, 7190 Oak St., for \$40. For more information about the campaign, visit [grandmotherscampaign.org](http://grandmotherscampaign.org). For more information about grandmothers groups in the Vancouver area, visit [greatervangogos.org](http://greatervangogos.org). ❖

— Courtesy of Tikkun Olam Gogos