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### **Twin Cities Gala Celebrates 40 Years of Opportunity International, Expected to Raise \$2 Million for Impoverished Families in Developing Countries**

***Funds raised will provide access to financial tools for 40,000 families working their way out of poverty; Don Whittaker, son of Opportunity International founder Al Whittaker to give remarks; Minnesota resident and contemporary Christian singer Sara Groves will entertain 450 guests***

**Minneapolis, Nov. 9, 2011** – [Opportunity International](http://www.opportunityinternational.org), a global nonprofit that has provided access to financial tools for those living in poverty around the globe since 1971, will celebrate its 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary with “Side by Side: Celebrating 40 Years of Opportunity,” a gala event on Thursday, November 17, at International Market Square in Minneapolis. “Side by Side” will begin at 6 p.m. and will include a reception, dinner, entertainment and silent auction.

“For 40 years, Opportunity International has been working alongside our clients, staff and supporters to fight global poverty,” said Betty Jane Hess, chair, Opportunity International Board of Directors. “Through these collaborations, powerful financial tools including savings, small business loans, insurance, and training are increasingly available to communities around the globe and impact the day-to-day lives of millions of people. We are excited to share in this important milestone in our organization with those who will join us on November 17 in Minneapolis.”

“Side by Side: 40 Years of Opportunity” is expected to draw more than 450 attendees from the Twin Cities’ business and philanthropic communities. Special guests will include Don Whittaker, son of Opportunity International founder, Al Whittaker; Paul Tshihamba, missions pastor, Christ Presbyterian Church in Minneapolis and a Democratic Republic of Congo native; Mark A. Thompson, vice chair, Opportunity International Board of Directors; Ted Moser, member, Opportunity International Board of Directors; Frida Mungoma, education finance manager, Opportunity Uganda; and members of the Twin Cities Chapter of Young Ambassadors for Opportunity, a national network of passionate, globally-minded young professionals dedicated to providing economic opportunities for people living in chronic poverty. Entertainment for the evening will be provided by Minnesota resident and contemporary Christian singer, Sara Groves.

The evening will begin with a reception and silent auction featuring several international and domestic travel experiences including a five-day Insight Trip see Opportunity’s work in Colombia; an Azamara Club Cruise to Singapore and Mumbai, India, with a chance to see Opportunity’s work in Chennai, India; a weekend retreat for 30 persons at The Old Chicago Club on Lac Courte Oreilles near Hayward, Wis.; a Tucson, Ariz. golf vacation; and a stay at Club Cascades de Baja in Cabo San Lucas, Mexico. Opportunity



International hopes to raise \$2 million to provide access to financial tools for 40,000 families working their way out of poverty in the developing world.

Among the individuals and families who will benefit from the funds raised at "Side by Side" are women like Norma Vergara of Henequen, Colombia. Norma needed only a small amount of money to take advantage of a business opportunity that could make a significant difference in her life. Working side by side with Opportunity Loan Officer Diana Araujo and a Trust Group of women in her community, Norma was able to secure her first loan of \$76 and receive training to grow her business. Norma collects used plastic bags from the city dump, and now employs up to five neighbors to clean and sort the bags. With profits from the sale of the bags, she is able to pay school fees and purchase supplies for her two children, Carlos David, 11, and Jonathan, 8.

Corporations and businesses working with Opportunity International to support "Side by Side: Celebrating 40 Years of Opportunity" include Azamara Club Cruises; Dorsey and Whitney, LLP; Horizontal Integration; Medtronic Foundation; National Christian Foundation of the Twin Cities; and Print 4 Change, a Minneapolis printing company that donates 50% of everything it earns to bring water, food, shelter and education to those living in extreme poverty; and Wells Fargo.

"Wells Fargo is delighted to support Opportunity International on its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of providing financial tools to families working their way out of poverty in the developing world," said Carrie Yakola, senior vice president, international treasury management, Wells Fargo. "We believe that microfinance is an effective tool to help alleviate poverty, and throughout our organization we are committed to strengthening communities here in the U.S. and around the globe by providing funding and resources to support microfinance programs."

Andy Bennett, chief operating officer, National Christian Foundation of the Twin Cities, said in a statement, "We are proud to partner with Opportunity International, and enjoy working with its private donor base here in the Twin Cities to identify individual giving strategies that will best support Opportunity in its work to bring access to financial services to the world's poorest citizens."

Honorary co-chairs for "Side by Side: Celebrating 40 Years of Opportunity" are members of Opportunity International's Board of Governors, Polly and Robert McCrea, and Mary Lynn and Warren Staley. Event co-chairs are Katie McElroy and Kelly Palmer.

For more information or to purchase tickets, visit <http://www.opportunity.org/be-involved/events/mn40th/>

### **About Opportunity International**

Opportunity International provides access to savings accounts, small business loans, insurance and training to three million people working their way out of poverty in the developing world. Clients in more than 20 countries use these financial tools to start or expand a business, provide for their families, create jobs for their neighbors and build a safety net for the future. For more information, visit [www.opportunity.org](http://www.opportunity.org).

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