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Daring to dream about a better Africa

▶ Toronto Fashion Week fundraiser to help Africa

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FOR METRO CANADA

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The key to effective donation to a cause is doing it via something you love.

Such is the case with the Dare to Wear Love fashion show fundraiser slated to close LG Fashion Week at Heritage Court, Exhibition Place this Friday night.

Featuring one-of-a-kind creations from 25 top Canadian designers, and celebrity models such as singer Keshia Chante and BT co-host Dina Pugliese, the event benefits The Stephen Lewis Foundation (SLF).

Through grassroots programs in Africa, SLF supports millions of people, especially women and children, living with the effects of HIV and AIDS.

"We were looking for a way to give back," says Jim Searle of Hoax Couture, who with partner Chris Tyrell and a total network of about 100 volunteers produces the event, now in its second year. "We thought Africa was a place we'd like help."

A chance meet last year with Ilana Landsberg-Lewis, Executive Director of the Stephen Lewis foundation, solidified the idea, and a chat with Robin Kay, President of the Fashion Design Council of Canada, quickly took the concept from a small club show to Fashion Week's closing night slot in 2009.

"We raised about \$40,000," says Searle, still in awe of how serendipitously everything came together.

For Linda Lundström, Dare to Wear Love is a chance to contribute to a cause about which she is also passionate, as well as an opportunity to flex her creative muscles.

Like the other participating designers — this year includes Brian Bailey, Evan Biddell, Comrags and David Dixon — she started from a supplied length of fabric Searle and Tyrell sourced on a trip to Africa.

"African fabric is really different from what our eye is used to seeing — the colour combinations, the



RICK MADONIK/TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Designers Jim Searle (left) and Chris Tyrell bookend models Sierra Nallo (tall) and Makara Adkins, who are wearing two of the dresses they designed.

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patterns – it's an expression of a different esthetic," notes Lundström, who sewed her pieces herself. "It begs to have something that expresses that uniqueness made from it."

Lundström's husband inadvertently contributed to her design: instead of cinammon powder she'd requested for a recipe, he brought home cinammon sticks.

Inspired by their shape and texture, the designer turned them into trim for the two pieces she crafted for the show.

Last year's designer creations are now up for auction at daretowearlove.com; that's where you can get a ticket to Friday's show.

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