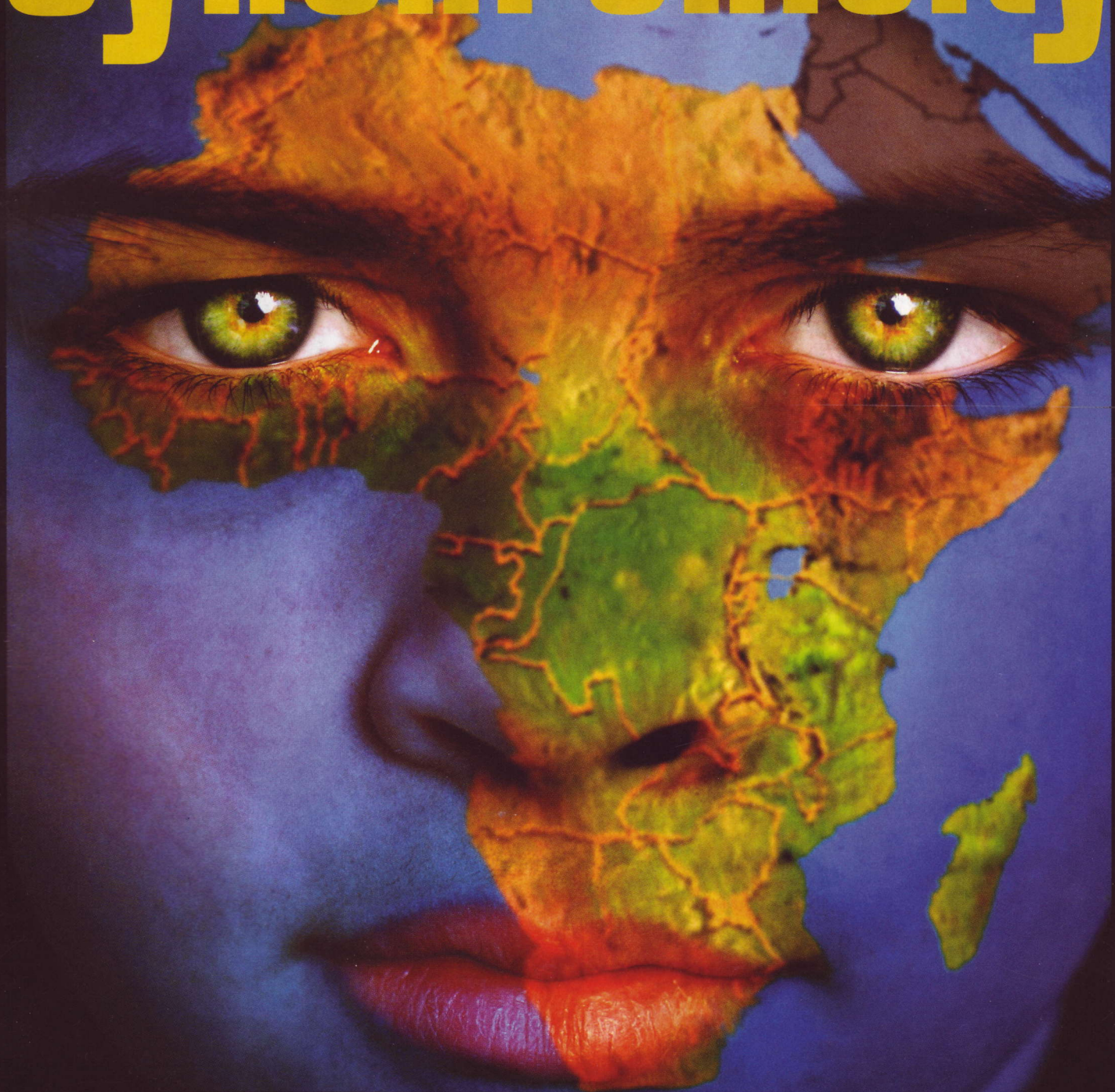


CANADA'S MAGAZINE FOR BODY, MIND, SPIRIT & EARTH

ISSUE 83 June / July 2007

Synchronicity



Travel & Exploration

FREE IN SELECTED LOCATIONS
IN ALBERTA & B.C.
\$4.50 ELSEWHERE
www.synchronicitymagazine.ca

MARY TIDLUND - MODERN TRAILBLAZER

By Donna Gray

In the heart of Calgary's booming economy, there's a charitable movement that is quickly crossing over many borders, several oceans and even political boundaries.

Leading the way is one of the city's most admirable trailblazers in global poverty assistance. Mary Tidlund, founder of the Mary A. Tidlund Foundation says she's got a soft spot for kids, Africa and giving. She's also cornered the market on ingenuity and building relationships to help others who cope with less.

As a science graduate of the University of Calgary, Tidlund didn't waste time working her way up the corporate ladder. Making her mark as CEO of a thriving oil and gas company, she also successfully managed several independent businesses.

During her career, Tidlund traveled extensively to some of the world's poorest countries. Each time she returned from a trip, she was left with a niggling feeling to give—of herself, her heart and mind.

"I have had a very successful and fulfilled life," she says. "I was thinking I had way too many skills not to assist others. International work was something I hadn't done before and I discovered I like meeting impoverished people in these countries. It drove me to support them."

In 1998, her dream became reality. She left her job to create the Mary A. Tidlund Foundation. The primary goal was to alleviate poverty by providing medical supplies, educational support, materials, and staffing to countries such as Angola, India, Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya, Haiti, as well as charities in the greater Calgary area.

The motto was simple: exchange and promote caring, sharing, giving and receiving.

Connecting with colleagues and community members, she found more financial and service-based support than she ever thought possible.

But change wasn't easy. Tidlund found the two worlds, corporate and non-profit, almost polar opposites, but strangely connected. It took time to adjust her methods and goals.

"I used to have an identity crisis," she says. "I went from living in a profit-driven world and shifting over to a charitable one." Tidlund began planning trips overseas to cities and towns with obscene poverty, illness and civil strife. She has built an army of about 40 volunteers who regularly make themselves available

to assist wherever needed.

The highly political and emotionally charged nature of overseas work can wear on the soul and the psyche, cites Tidlund. Keeping a balanced perspective helps her stay focused on the tasks at hand.

"I used to get overwhelmed, but then I realized that for these people, it's life," she says. "I can't save the world. I focus on the positive of what I see and what I can do to give support."

Volunteers often accompany her on trips and find their hearts quickly succumb to the friendliness and simplicity of a third-world life.

"It's transformational," she says. "Usually they are awakened to the reality that life for some is very different than what we are exposed to in the news. They can't believe the connections they make, how friendly and happy everyone is, despite having very little or nothing at all."

The children and adults assisted by the Mary A. Tidlund Foundation also walk away with a new respect for those who come from a land so very far away.

"They are always surprised that we are warm and caring," she says. From our back yard here in Canada to across the world, whether it be clean water projects in Haiti, providing education and learning skills to those in need in Nepal, to assisting individuals with medical needs, the Mary A. Tidlund Charitable Foundation truly lives up to

their Vision: "to grow and work together as a creative part of our community, with respect, compassion, understanding and openness to empowering each other

Tidlund says she will continually explore additional countries and opportunities to help others in less than ideal circumstances. She's more than prepared to give her energies to the foundation over the long haul, but isn't shy about sharing the load.

"I've set it up as a legacy to last my lifetime and longer. Now it's getting to the stage where I can step back and let others help."

The Mary A. Tidlund Foundation is hosting a fundraiser at the Webster Galleries in Calgary, June 6 at 6:30 p.m. To find out more, or to volunteer time, money, services, or support, contact Mary via www.tidlundfoundation.com or call (403) 609-5563. John Webster and Webster Galleries have pledged 10% of all art sales from June 6 - June 30, 2007 as a heartfelt donation to the Mary A. Tidlund Foundation.

