

## PRESS RELEASE

### **A major initiative by young Zulus to fight the HIV-Pandemic in a vast rural corner of South Africa is being launched this summer by actor Jude Law and Sadie Frost.**

Jude Law and Sadie Frost will introduce the first performance, at South Africa House in London, of the Young Zulu Warriors, who are staging the musical drama 'Thula Sizwe' in 20 performances throughout the UK in June/July 2007. Jude will also introduce a later performance at The Clapham Grand Theatre on 2<sup>nd</sup> July. Sadie Frost will introduce a Gospel Concert by the cast at St. Mary's Church, Edgware Road on 25<sup>th</sup> July at 7pm.

Many of the young Zulu cast have been orphaned by the HIV pandemic.

In many cases, the lives of the performers were saved by the humanitarian Heather Reynolds, a 55-year-old woman described by Nelson Mandela as one of the heroines of modern South Africa. She established God's Golden Acre in 1994 - spending her life-savings in the process. This is a non profit-making charity involved in the care of children who have been orphaned or abandoned because of HIV/AIDS related diseases and violence. The project is located in the South African province of Kwa Zulu-Natal, in the Valley of a Thousand Hills, which is the world's epicentre of the HIV pandemic.

Last Christmas Jude, Sadie, and their children spent time at God's Golden Acre and visited the rural Valleys where the GGA outreach projects support orphaned and vulnerable children in their communities.

Law says: "Heather is an amazing woman whose pioneering work has resulted in saving thousands of desperately sick and dying orphaned children".

God's Golden Acre Khayelihle was first started in a small way in the Reynolds' own home and her dedication restored most of these sick children back to life. More than 4000 are supported in their extended families, and are back in school and receive food and medical help. 75 of these children who have no extended families, and who need special care, are housed in cluster foster care at God's Golden Acre, Cato Ridge, near Durban.

While at the sanctuary, Jude participated in a performance of 'Thule Sizwe' in the purpose-built Zulu Theatre and Sadie took part in tribal dance celebrations. "Our children are wrapped up in the material world," he said. 'It is important to go to this place and see how lucky they are. As a family it's an amazing thing to do.'

Jude and Sadie were so moved by what they witnessed that they pledged to help promote the fund-raising efforts of the Charity and its young performers who call Heather Reynolds Mawethu - "Our

mother." They both regard the fight against the AIDS-pandemic as vital to the future of Southern Africa, and will continue to champion the work being carried out at God's Golden Acre.

The God's Golden Acre Young Zulu Warriors will be performing at 20 venues throughout the United Kingdom. Please see attached itinerary.

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NOTES FOR EDITORS ABOUT GOD'S GOLDEN ACRE: Rather than trying to place children in orphanages, God's Golden Acre Khayelihle strives to keep orphaned and vulnerable children in their extended families within their communities.

Its aim is to achieve the following:

To provide orphaned and vulnerable children with food and medical help and education.

To involve these children in recreational and rehabilitation programmes such as soccer, netball, athletics, song and dance.

To assist them to become well-adjusted adults.

To develop the natural talents and aptitudes of each and every child.

To provide a caring, loving, nurturing and compassionate community environment.

God's Golden Acre UK is a registered charity that fundraises to support the work of God's Golden Acre Khayelihle in South Africa. Along with similar organisations in USA, Netherlands and Norway, we form a network of "Friends of God's Golden Acre Khayelihle" that enables God's Golden Acre Khayelihle to continue with such valuable work. Friends of God's Golden Acre are a vital source of income without which Heather would be unable to carry out the wonderful work that she does.

Heather has established an extensive rural outreach project that now cares for more than 4000 orphaned and abandoned children who were living in appalling conditions, providing a basic food parcel, education and school uniforms. Every day more and more children are orphaned. The HIV/AIDS pandemic is now reaching its peak in Kwa Zulu Natal. It is the worst affected area in the world; 36% of the population is HIV positive and up to 250 deaths are recorded a day. Heather started a child-sponsorship programme

that more and more people are supporting, thus enabling more families to receive the basic necessities to survive.

After Heather presented a paper at the World AIDS Conference in 2000, she was invited to speak at many conferences throughout the world. She is now an inspirational speaker, who dedicates a lot of her time to giving talks and interviews.

To stop the children from turning to drugs and joining gangs, Heather started a sporting project that now has more than 100 junior soccer teams. The children also have regular coaching sessions when finances permit.

Heather and her sculptor husband Patrick established the community for orphans in 1998 as a place where nearly 100 children could find sanctuary from abuse, poverty, and starvation, and the sick could die with dignity. Teams of volunteers risk danger distributing basic food supplies to the many scattered families, most headed by a granny or teenage girl.

Each day they rub shoulders with death. For many dying mothers, Heather is the last hope for their children to receive help and sustenance.

In the early years, Heather and Patrick dedicated their entire savings to the orphans and fighting the AIDS pandemic. They faced financial ruin, white and black prejudice, indifference, cruelty and a bureaucracy overwhelmed by need. Often there wasn't enough to eat. Yet time and again, through a series of miracles, and Heather's resolute faith, donors stepped in, touched and challenged by the spirit of Mawethu - the Zulu word for "Our Mother".

The following is an extract from Heather's biography *God's Golden Acre* (Monarch)

"The boy was lying on a mat in the hut. He had probably less than a day to live. I finally broke the silence. 'God, from this day on I will help every child in need, every child that needs a home, every child that crosses my path.'" Heather's sanctuary in South Africa, known as "God's Golden Acre Khayelihle", is the outcome of that promise.