

For Toronto Star
Letter to Editor in response to May 17th, 2006 Article "Aeroplan donation goes the distance"

From
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Giving street kids everywhere a chance with our Aeroplan miles.

It was with great pleasure that I read about the significant donation of Aeroplan points to International Development and Relief Charities in May 17th article "**Aeroplan donation goes the distance**". We at Street Kids International have first hand experience at what a significant impact the donation of miles can make.

Since spring 2003, we have been the fortunate recipients of over 4 million Aeroplan points through Air Canada's Kids Horizons program. This program focuses on ending youth poverty, and selected Street Kids International as the international charity it would support in doing so. With our points, we have sent program staff and volunteers to Africa, Latin America and the Former Soviet Union to deliver our programming which uses entrepreneurship to improve the lives of youth living in poverty. We have been able to improve the health of kids living or working on the street by teaching them about HIV/AIDS and the risks of drug use while providing them with safe and healthy alternatives to these risky behaviours.

Further, Air Canada Kids Horizons points also enabled us to expand our funding base globally, including United Nations agencies, the Open Society Institute (Soros Foundation), and the Canadian International Development Agency. This has made us more sustainable but also dependent on a continuous supply of points to maintain and grow these relationships.

As a niche Canadian Charity serving the world's most vulnerable youth since being founded in 1988 by Canadian Lawyer Peter Daghish, we know that long term commitments that support travel costs make a significant difference in an organization's ability to reach more people. We appreciate Air Canada's Kids Horizons long-term commitment to this type of support, and hope that Aeroplan and Canadian donors continue to grow this new approach to supporting charities from Tanzania to Russia.