Rick Mercer and Plan Canada launch 7th annual Spread the Net Student Challenge to prevent malaria

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Spread the Net

Toronto, ON (RPRN) 10/01/13 — Canadian comedian Rick Mercer and Plan Canada are bringing the fight against malaria to schools across Canada with the launch of the 7th annual *Spread the Net* Student Challenge.

Since 2007, *Spread the Net* has engaged students across Canada in the Student Challenge. Championed by celebrated comedian Rick Mercer, Canadian elementary, secondary and post-secondary schools register to participate in a friendly competition to raise funds for $10 malaria-preventing bed nets. The top fundraising elementary, secondary and post-secondary schools will receive a visit from Mercer and appear on an episode of the Rick Mercer Report.

“Malaria claims the lives of over 660,000 people each year, and it remains the leading cause of death in children under five,” says Mercer. “Malaria is spread through mosquito bites, and an insecticide-treated bed net is the most effective way of preventing the disease. I’ve seen first-hand the devastating effects of malaria, and I challenge students across the country to get

involved, raise funds and help save lives."

To date, over 500 schools across Canada have participated in the *Spread the Net* Student Challenge, raising close to $1.1 million for malaria-preventing bed nets. Since 2007, *Spread the Net* has protected the lives of some 2.5 million children and pregnant women, delivering close to 563,000 bed nets to families in Liberia, Rwanda, Uganda, Tanzania and Guinea.

"I'm routinely inspired by the passionate and thoughtful way that I see young Canadians approaching the issues of poverty and social justice," says Rosemary McCarney, Plan Canada President and CEO. "We're thrilled to be working with Rick and the Rick Mercer Report on the *Spread the Net* Student Challenge moving forward. The Challenge is a fun and tangible way for students right across the country to learn about the issues faced by children and families in the global South and to show their caring and support."

The Student Challenge launches September 30, 2013 and runs until February 28, 2014. Schools can register at any time before February 28 at **spreadthenet.ca**

About Plan

Founded in 1937, Plan is one of the world's oldest and largest international development agencies, working in partnership with millions of people around the world to end global poverty. Not for profit, independent and inclusive of all faiths and cultures, Plan has only one agenda: to improve the lives of children. **Because I am a Girl** is Plan's global initiative to end gender inequality, promote girls' rights and lift millions of girls – and everyone around them – out of poverty. Visit plancanada.ca and becauseiamagirl.ca for more information.

About Spread the Net

Spread the Net **is a grassroots campaign designed to motivate, educate**

and inspire Canadians to help end preventable malaria deaths by raising funds and awareness to support the purchase and distribution of bed nets to children and families in Africa.*Spread the Net* was founded in 2006 by Belinda Stronach, P.C., and comedian Rick Mercer, becoming an initiative of Plan Canada in July 2013. Visit spreadthenet.ca for more information.

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