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PAPER TO PEARLS: CREATING GLOBAL CONNECTIONS

Alexandria, VA— The Paper to Pearls initiative not only benefits the women of northern Uganda, it indirectly supports causes as diverse as the Stop Human Trafficking movement and building homes and schools for African orphans. In the process, connections are built between the Paper to Pearls beaders and others in need throughout the world.

The connections often begin with the purchase of loose paper beads, which Paper to Pearls makes available as craft beads. These, in turn, are transformed into hand crafted jewelry items, designed and created by individuals with a passion for helping others. Women like Ashley Gray, of Wings of Refuge, sell their creations to raise money for their cause, and in doing so also support Paper to Pearls' Ugandan beaders.

"The mission of our orphanage project is to provide for the children of Africa by nurturing orphans physically, spiritually, and mentally and by providing them with a proper education," explained Ashley Gray, co-founder of Wings of Refuge. "When I came across Paper to Pearls, I thought it would be a wonderful way to benefit two causes. I also wanted a creative way to fundraise in these tough economic times."

Accessories for Hope, inspired by the Not For Sale campaign, seeks to educate and raise awareness about the injustice of modern day slavery. Founder Sherry Searles purchases Paper to Pearls necklaces and bracelets and resells them at her Freedom Parties. The proceeds go directly to those who have been rescued from human trafficking through organizations that help the oppressed all over the world.

"I love the fact that my efforts are helping so many people," says Sherry. "I believe that there's something each of us can do."

The efforts of people like Ashley Gray and Sherry Searles illustrate how the creative outpouring of support for the "bottom billion" creates multiple connections that have the power to change lives.

About Paper to Pearls

An initiative of Voices for Global Change, Paper to Pearls works with women from internal refugee camps in northern Uganda to create jewelry by hand-rolling beads from recycled paper, which is then sold in the United States and throughout the world. On average, 85 percent of the sale price of each piece of jewelry directly benefits the beader through income and training. Since 2006, the program has grown to include nearly 125 women in nine beading cooperatives, allowing them to make approximately four times the national average wage. Concerned with empowerment and self-sufficiency, Paper to Pearls also provides women with the skills and confidence to take control of their own lives. For more information and to purchase jewelry items, visit www.papertopearls.org.