

Assemble & Act

One photographer mobilizes many to give more.

Altruistic enthusiasm and the long light of June 21, 2006 energized the photographers, models, hair and makeup artists in the first ever Summer Solstice Shoot for the Compassionate Eye Foundation. The event resulted in over 200 image selects by Getty Images and is expected to generate thousands of dollars for the Foundation over the next seven years. It is the fruit of an ambitious and generous philanthropic effort initiated by Robert Kent and supporters. It is a lesson in action.

The Compassionate Eye Foundation was built from the heart. Upon returning from trips to South Africa and Cambodia, Robert was feeling grateful for the abundance in his life. He felt it was “time to make a difference” and give back. With the support and guidance of a few friends he assembled the people who would make the Foundation a reality and started planning.

Robert learned that there were three basic requirements for a successful foundation: workers, wisdom and wealth. He was prepared for the work. He could recruit and develop the wisdom. Wealth was the challenge. The Foundation started very small. Robert put much of his own money into the startup costs. A fundraising dinner held at his home raised \$2000. Small donations from family and friends filled in a few gaps. Something substantial was required. Then Robert saw the opportunity within his own industry.

As a photographer with an impressive 21 year career, Robert spends 50% of his time on custom photography shoots for specific advertising clients. He licenses the other fifty percent of his work to Getty Images as stock photography. It is in this latter business model that Robert saw his chance to generate wealth for the Foundation. If he could win the support of other photographers to create stock photography and direct the royalty receipts to the Foundation, the kind of money that was needed could be made.

On June 21, twelve photographers and crews volunteered their time for studio and location shoots. The beach, hotels, supermarkets – a variety of locations were used. There were crews in New Mexico and Thailand participating but most were in the Vancouver area. A dinner party was held at the end of the day where the joy of collaboration and potential of what they had done was celebrated. Robert's editor from Getty Images had never seen anything like it. It was the first time in his 20 years of industry experience that he had been involved in a shoot for a higher cause.

Based in British Columbia, the Compassionate Eye Foundation is dedicated to supporting developing nations through educational initiatives. The focus of their effort is currently Comitancillo, Guatemala – a very poor municipality in the northwest part of the country. Believing that education can help address the community's unemployment problem, the Foundation purchased land for a new school in March of 2006. Since then \$10,000 has been donated for the cost of material and labor for its construction. Further donations are planned to equip the school. This is the type of 'giving back' about which Robert Kent and the Compassionate Eye Foundation are so passionate.

The Summer Solstice Shoot was a great success. In 2006 there was more interest than they could handle. Now that the Foundation has the systems and contracts in place, the event can grow. June 21, 2007 will see many more photographers and crews participating.

The desire to make a difference and some innovative thinking has resulted in a bright future for the Compassionate Eye Foundation. Robert expects that in five years it will be a multi-million dollar organization. He is bracing himself for a major change in his life. He is reevaluating everything to get ready for it. Now that he has learned that there are so many willing, he will continue to assemble supporters and act.

www.compassionateeye.org.
www.robertkentphoto.com