

LIVE AID

In the early eighties, famine struck the nation of Ethiopia, killing countless people through starvation and malnutrition. People around the world gave their sympathy, but not everyone rallied to help the people's plight. One who did was Irish rock star Bob Geldof. Geldof was perhaps most noted for his performance in the rock film called *The Wall*, as performed by the classic group Pink Floyd.

Geldof became aware of the famine through the news media, just as most other people did. However, he felt driven to make a difference.

In 1984, Bob Geldof organized the recording of a collaborative song for release during the Christmas season. It was entitled "*Do They Know It's Christmas?*" The song tells of the trouble in Africa, asking the people of the world to look beyond their own small spheres to see the starving people in Ethiopia for whom Christmas and other joys would mean nothing when compared to their life-threatening circumstances. Music superstars from several nations jointly collaborated on the record and it became one of the most successful records of the year.

However, this success was not enough for Geldof. He took the momentum of the song and organized two of the largest rock concerts ever and called them *Live Aid*. On July 7, 1985, the two concerts were broadcast around the world, and statistics show that one-third of the world's population watched the concerts live. One concert took place in Philadelphia's JFK stadium and the other in London's Wembley Stadium. Performers for the concerts included such music stars as The Who, Madonna, Paul McCartney, U2, Led Zeppelin, Bob Dylan, and Dire Straits. Throughout the shows, the performers asked listeners to donate money for Ethiopian famine relief. In all, approximately \$53 million was raised. Live Aid became a catalyst for other such efforts, including *Farm Aid* which continues to perform annually to help American farmers keep their farms.

Discussion Questions:

- Why do famous people feel an obligation to help the poor of the world?
- Should we feel the same obligation? Why or why not?
- If global philanthropy is too far removed for most of us, what can be done locally to benefit others?
- Is an area which students can improve or beautify for community enjoyment an example of "commonwealth" as previously discussed?
- Do you and the famous musicians have a common purpose when you carry out an action to help others? Why or why not?

