



For Immediate Release

**17TH ANNUAL VENETIAN BALL SMASHES RECORDS
SURPRISE PERFORMANCE BY STEVIE WONDER CAPS A MAGICAL EVENING WHICH
RAISES \$1.3 MILLION FOR VILLA CHARITIES**

Toronto, ON – October 18, 2010 – Downtown Toronto sparkled and dazzled on Saturday night as philanthropic supporters took over Metro Toronto Convention Centre for the 17th annual Venetian Ball, which raised a record \$1.3 million for Villa Charities. A new attendance record for the event was also set as nearly 2,400 guests participated in the prestigious Italian-themed gala.

The highlight of the evening was the surprise performance by Stevie Wonder, who brought guests to their feet with a string of memorable hits including *My Cherie Amour*, *I Just Called to Say I Love You* and *Superstition*. The Venetian Ball has established a tradition of surprising its guests with top name talent. Another surprise followed the performance when guests were invited to bid on the Yamaha piano used exclusively by Mr. Wonder, which sold to a lucky bidder for \$65,000. Also auctioned off was another spectacular treat—the very first Canadian edition of the much-anticipated and newly redesigned 2012 Fiat 500, which was purchased for \$85,000.

Attendees were also entertained by the one and only Master Impressionist and “Man of a Thousand Voices” Rich Little, who kept the crowd in stitches with his impersonations of Jack Nicholson and Johnny Cash.

“The success of the Venetian Ball continues to grow year after year,” said Rudolph P. Bratty, Chair of Villa Charities Foundation and Patron Chair of the 2010 Venetian Ball. “We are so thankful to our ball co-chairs and committee, our guests, and of course, Stevie Wonder, for making this night yet another unbelievable evening. The funds raised will help us continue to provide culturally sensitive care and improve the quality of life for seniors and those with intellectual disabilities.”

Guests wore custom masks imported from Italy and enjoyed harlequin dancers that entertained the crowd as head chef of Trattoria Do Forni in Venice, Domenico Di Gesu, prepared a delicious array of traditional Venetian-inspired cuisine. The meal culminated with dolcini stations and cheese and espresso bars. The Ball also showcased Italian cuisine from 16 top Toronto restaurants.

Music for the evening was provided by Toronto's own *Simply Grand*, led by vocalist George St. Kitts, who has been nominated for two Juno Awards for songs he wrote and produced.

With their long family histories of supporting Villa Charities, co-chairs Steven Muzzo and James Di Luca were thrilled when Villa requested they co-chair the Venetian Ball for the second year.

Since its inception in 1994, the Venetian Ball has amazed and entertained guests while celebrating the tradition, elegance and spectacle of the Italian Carnevale. Presenting sponsors for the 2010 Venetian Ball include International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 353 Toronto, FIAT, Tridel and OZZ Solar.

About Villa Charities

Since its formation in 1971 to provide culturally sensitive care for an elderly Italian-Canadian population, Villa Charities has extended its mandate to include support for individuals with intellectual disabilities and mental illness. Building on its rich Italian-Canadian heritage, and by living life with Italian passion, the Villa Charities family of organizations has grown to include Villa Colombo Services for Seniors, Columbus Centre, VITA Community Living Services, Mens Sana and Villa Colombo Vaughan Di Poce Centre. Recognizing its relevance across generations, Villa Charities is launching new initiatives to promote quality of life, health and wellness, youth engagement, the creation of new knowledge and investment in new technologies. For more information, visit www.villacharities.com.

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Media Contacts:

Kelly Olive

MAVERICK PR for Villa Charities

Office: 416-640-5525 x 230

kellyo@maverickpr.com

Stefanie Polsinelli

Villa Charities Inc.

Office: 416-789-7011, ext. 320

spolsinelli@villacharities.com