

The Love Dress
(modelled by
Miller's daughter
Samantha).

a little more on Red Thread

Do these dresses look familiar? This lovely line has graced the pages of *Canadian Family* on multiple occasions over the years. Season after season, we find ourselves captivated by Miller's choice of fabrics and multifunctional cuts. (She created the caterpillar dress, which transforms from a baby dress to a swing top, giving it a three- to four-year lifespan.) Aside from printed dresses, Miller and her team of skillful cutters and sewers (a significant leap from the early days of cutting patterns on the kitchen table and turning the basement into a sewing room) also make tees, pants, hats and quilts.

Making Love

How a Canadian-made dress is sending kids to school in Africa

BY SHANNON PHILLIPS

WHEN DEVORAH MILLER, Toronto-based kids clothing designer at Red Thread Design, decided to create a dress for charity, she says it was her three daughters, Isabel, 12, Samantha, 9, and Georgia, 7, who were the inspiration for getting involved and giving back. "Like every mother, my children make me want to be a better person and push myself in different ways." Without a second thought, Miller applied a do-as-I-do approach to show her girls that a little help can go a long way. And so, The Love Dress was born.

The dress was created to benefit the Canada Mathare Education Trust (CMETrust), a secular, volunteer-run registered Canadian charity that funds high school scholarships for children from the Mathare Valley slum in Nairobi, Kenya. The collaboration began after a chance meeting in 2008 with Victoria Sheppard, CMETrust's passionate founder, who was shopping at Red Thread Design's booth at The One of a Kind Show in Toronto. Eager to get involved, Miller, who has spent many years working in the cultural non-profit sector and has served on boards for grassroots charities, began donating dresses to CMETrust silent auctions, and then, wanting to do

even more, she pitched Sheppard her idea for The Love Dress.

The special edition dress, which costs \$60 (\$5 of each sale goes to CMETrust) and is available at redthreaddesign.ca, has an A-line cut and features two red intersecting lines. The lines, Miller says, carry the meaning behind the dress. They are representative of a Chinese proverb about the interconnectedness of humans, even across oceans. "An invisible red thread connects those who are destined to meet regardless of time, place or circumstance. The thread may stretch or tangle but it will never break," explains Miller. She also says that the simplicity of the dress design and the directness of the symbolism (connecting with people far away) was intentional. This way the young girls who wear the dress can share its meaning.

After making the dress a reality, Miller's thoughts turned back to her own family. "When I first had the idea to do this project about a year ago, I was very excited to see if I could really make it happen, to model the kind of risk-taking and community-mindedness that I want to encourage in my girls." The result, so far, has been a fulfilling endeavour for Miller, who is already thinking about her next charitable venture. "I'll take lessons learned from this inaugural project and take it from there!" **CF**