

Media release

15 December 2011

The X Factor grand finalist Andrew Wishart launches new Children365 calendar dedicated in memory of four-year-old Darcey Freeman

The X Factor grand finalist Andrew Wishart and his wife Robbie are calling on all Australians to cherish their children every day and to give a special Christmas gift that puts their family in the picture.

The Alannah and Madeline Foundation, a national charity keeping children safe from violence, is pleased to announce the launch of its new Children365 calendar.

The special calendar is personalised with your own photos and suggests ideas for fun family activities. This A3-sized calendar makes a great gift for Christmas and the New Year.

The concept for the Children365 initiative was developed after the tragic death of four-year-old Darcey Freeman in January 2009 at Melbourne's West Gate Bridge. Following her death it was the wish of the family that there be some positive action out of such a terrible tragedy.

"This is a beautiful concept that has arisen from such an awful tragedy," Andrew Wishart said.

"I remember the very moment when I learnt of little Darcey Freeman and like many I am sure, cried openly and unashamedly... and actually, I still do."

Andrew said performing on *The X Factor* and being away for extended periods made him realise even more, how much he loves his four children (Tully, 14, Levii, 12, Bahlin, 11 and Indiah, 9) and how important it is for everyone to cherish their children every day.

Dr Judith Slocombe, CEO of The Alannah and Madeline Foundation and mother of nine children, explains said Children365 encourages adults to take the time to think about why the children in their lives are important and how they can spend time together.

"When you buy a Children365 calendar, you're not only doing something special for yourself, you're also helping children whose lives have been affected by violence. Proceeds from the sale of the calendar will benefit The Alannah and Madeline Foundation's Children Ahead program which helps children recover from traumatic events and violent circumstances."

The calendar can be ordered from the Foundation's website: www.amf.org.au or by calling 1300 720 747. Calendars must be ordered by 16 December for pre-Christmas delivery. However orders are open all year round.

In addition to the calendar, people can visit The Alannah and Madeline Foundation's website and make a 365 statement of promises and declarations about the children in your life:

3 reasons I love my children
6 ways they make me smile
5 things we will do together this year

Statement from Tim Barnes, Darcey's uncle and spokesperson for the family:

"The Alannah and Madeline Foundation has been a wonderful help to our family during the very trying and difficult period following Darcey's death. We continue to be extremely supportive of Children365 and are pleased that this calendar will provide a daily reminder to celebrate and cherish your children every day of the year," he said.

Andrew Wishart and his family and Judith Slocombe are available for interviews and photographs. To coordinate media opportunity please contact Ellen Sproule on 03 9697 0628 / ellen.sproule@amf.org.au or Andrea Appleby on 0419 392 404. Note: Darcey's family will not provide any interviews.

About The Alannah and Madeline Foundation: The Alannah and Madeline Foundation is a national charity protecting children from violence and its devastating impact. The Foundation was established in memory of Alannah and Madeline Mikac, aged 6 and 3, who were tragically killed with their mother and 32 others at Port Arthur, Tasmania on 28 April 1996. The Foundation cares for children who have experienced or witnessed violence, and runs programs that help to prevent violence in the lives of children. Our vision is that every child will live in a safe and supportive environment. For more information visit: www.amf.org.au or call 1300 720 747.