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A&E Network Star Tanya Memme:

Helping Children in Need
and Supporting the
Elizabeth Seton Pediatric
Center's Plans for a
New Facility in 2011

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Tanya Memme, Co-Host of *Sell This House*, Lends Her Voice to Children in Need



As spokesperson for World Vision Canada, Tanya Memme and her fiancée, Vahan Yeprmyan, visited a rescue center in Cambodia where victims of child trafficking are housed.

CLUTTER, DIRT AND STRANGE PERSONAL ITEMS are great for scaring off prospective home buyers. That's one of the lessons you learn if you watch A&E Network's *Sell This House*, a real estate reality show about staging homes for sale. With a sense of humor and a gallon of paint, co-host Tanya Memme—a beautiful former Miss Canada—somehow manages to make cleaning and rearranging furniture entertaining. If you have ever done either, you know what an accomplishment that is.

Staging homes may be superficial, but it is Tanya's inner beauty—not her model looks—that makes her stand out. As spokesperson for World Vision Canada, she and her fiancée, Vahan Yeprmyan, visited a rescue center in Cambodia where victims of child trafficking are housed. She also interviewed affected children and their families for a television show that aired in Canada, calling attention to an issue for hundreds of thousands of children in Southeast Asia.

In addition to co-hosting *Sell This House* with Roger Hazard, Tanya is well-known in Los Angeles as the former host of CBS-2's *9 On the Town* and ABC-7's *Eye on LA*. She has also hosted *Hollywood 411* for TV Guide Network, *Entertainment Tonight Canada* and three seasons of TLC's *Robotica*. Tanya has appeared on television shows such as *The Practice*, *JAG*, *CSI Miami*, *Saturday Night Live* with Sylvester Stallone and various independent films. A former sports and entertainment reporter, Tanya is the spokesperson for Direct Buy and Renuzit, the new fragrance line from the Dial Corporation.

In this interview with *COMMERCE*, Tanya Memme discusses *Sell This House*, her new music CD, her new movie with Corey Feldman and her efforts to help children in need.

COMMERCE: *As an actress and a television personality, you are speaking up for children that don't have a voice. What can you tell us about your efforts?*

TANYA MEMME: As the spokesperson for World Vision Canada, I was asked to go to Cambodia to do a report on child trafficking, and to visit with and interview some of the children who have been victimized. I went to the World Vision Canada headquarters in Cambodia and talked with girls ages 6 to 12 that were rescued from a life of prostitution. There are hundreds of thousands of young girls involved in child trafficking and only 60 girls at the World Vision Canada Rescue Center. Meeting these children and hearing their stories was a life-changing experience.

Q. *What did you see or hear that made such an impression on you?*

A. Whole families make \$3.50 per month. Children are selling other children for sex. And other children are forced to work in brick factories with quotas of moving 10,000 bricks or they don't get paid. I did interviews and reports about the World Vision Canada Rescue Center for a television special that aired in Canada. At least I was able to bring attention to this horrible and tragic situation. There is just no reason children should be treated like this, and no way to not be affected by seeing and hearing what has been going on here. In addition to the television special, we were able to purchase some essential items from a remote market for some of the families we visited. The need is so great.

Q. *Helping children is a very worthy cause. I know you support and lend your voice to other efforts as well.*

A. Helping children in need is something I do with passion. From protecting children from child labor and sex trafficking in Cambodia to helping children get the specialized medical, long-term care at hospitals such as the Elizabeth Seton Pediatric Center in New York City. It is absolutely necessary to do what we can to help those who can't help themselves. Long-term care for children with chronic conditions is an underserved need. A new building for the Elizabeth Seton Pediatric Center is really needed so the Center can help more children and their families.

Tanya Memme is the spokesperson for Direct Buy and Renuzit, the new fragrance line from the Dial Corporation.



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Q. Most people know of you as the co-host of A&E Network's *Sell This House*. How is that show doing?



Tanya Memme and a small crew help homeowners with painting and minor repairs that make their houses more attractive to potential buyers.

A. *Sell This House*, which was nominated for an Emmy last year, has been increasing in popularity. It just got picked up for a 7th season.

Q. What are some do's and don'ts about staging houses that you learned from the show?

A. The definite don't is clutter and having too many collectables all over the place. You don't want anything too personal. You want your house to look like a nice, clean hotel room. No baby pictures, no Elvis photos or crazy exotic animals or frogs in the living room.

Q. I read that your family is in the home construction business.

A. My family owns Mountainview Homes in Ontario, Canada, which won the "Homebuilder of the Year" award two years ago. The company builds between 200 and 400 houses per year. Even though I grew up in this business, I never imagined that my move to Hollywood would get me a job on a housing-related television show. I find myself back where I started, in a good way.

Q. You seem very genuine on *Sell This House*. Is this an acting gig or reality television?

A. Because I grew up on a 200-acre farm in Canada, I wasn't exposed to a lot of media and didn't get to see Hollywood until my early 20s. I was in the middle of nowhere, where playing outside and the company of

friends and neighbors was entertainment. I think that helped me become the person I am today, and I hope that comes across on *Sell This House*. We try to be entertaining, but we're not acting. What you see is what we're really like: having fun, down-to-earth and getting paint under our fingernails. It's reality with a little extra drama for the television audience.

Q. What is the worst thing that you have found while cleaning out a home that you were staging on the show?

A. We were in one house in Philadelphia where we were greeted by a wall of odor—cat urine. We found this coach that had crystallized cat urine under the cushions and overflowing cat litter boxes everywhere.

Q. Yum....

A. You can't sell a house that smells like that. We had to hire professionals to clean the house.

Q. How does the show select which homes you and co-host Roger Hazard will be staging and in what cities?

A. We contact the real estate agencies in the cities where we want to film and they help us narrow down which houses we want to stage. Then we interview the homeowners to find some interesting personalities and people to work with. We select two houses in each city we film in, and our travel schedule is arranged one year in advance.

Q. While looking at your Web site, I noticed that you have a new music CD called *Gemini* out now. How did this project come about?

A. I always wanted to be on Broadway—that's why I studied at the American Musical & Dramatic Academy in New York City. I have been singing and dancing for many years, and enjoyed doing some off-Broadway shows until I was lured away by the better paydays of television. But I've always wanted to release a Christmas music CD. This CD, *Gemini*, is very personal and each song means something to me. And it's my first CD.

Q. What is the most meaningful song on the CD and what inspired you to write it?

A. When I was 21 years old, I called off my wedding one week before it was going to happen. I was in an unhealthy relationship, and I wrote the song "Still" based on a diary excerpt that I found dated just before I called off the wedding. It's about how women choose to stay in unhealthy relationships and why they are afraid to get

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out of them. For me, the end of the relationship was the beginning of my path to Hollywood. There's another song, "Swear on This," which deals with the day I put my cat Oscar to sleep. He was my best friend, and the song has to do with my love for him.

Q. *You are a former Miss Canada. What did you learn from your pageant days?*

A. I loved being Miss Canada. It was an amazing experience that groomed me to be "on" when I need to be "on" and this is necessary when you host a show on television or need to promote yourself in the entertainment business. I did give up my crown 5 months after becoming Miss Canada because I wanted to be free to pursue my career in music and dance and I was uncomfortable with the burden that came with the title and the man I had to work with. Giving up the crown was the only way to be free.

Q. *Is it true you just did a horror film with Corey Feldman?*

A. I just did a horror movie with Corey Feldman called *Terror Inside*, which had its premiere at the Fort Lauderdale Film Festival in Florida. I recently won a Crystal Reel Award for my role in the movie. I play the lead, Maria, and get a horrible virus that makes me evil and sick and it shows me like you have never seen me before. I do my own stunts as well.

Q. *You like extreme sports and activities to stay in shape and for fun. Did that help with the stunt work?*

A. One of my dreams is to do an action movie, and I would love to do all of my own stunts. As for extreme sports, I did 400 miles on my bike over 5 days. It was much more difficult than the stunt-car driving or helicopter skiing that I have done in the past. Every year, I try to challenge myself—physically, emotionally and spiritually. When I talk to kids in motivational speeches, I tell them to face their fears. I try to live that in my own life, too. ■



Two of Tanya Memme's current projects include her first music CD, *Gemini*, and her first lead role in a feature film, *Terror Inside*, with Corey Feldman.