

## Pop Group Hanson Walks On

By Lauren Lykke

Standing barefoot on UIC's quad in 42-degree weather, the brothers that make up the famous pop band Hanson told around 100 students and fans how the company they are active with—Tom's Shoes—came up with an idea to take shoeless walks to represent the sufferings that millions of African children go through daily.

Then they took a barefoot, mile-long walk themselves.

The brothers who rose to fame with their first single, "Mmmmbop," in 1997 have been doing these barefoot walks in conjunction with Tom's Shoes, which donates a pair of shoes to Africa for every pair they sell, since 2007. More than 200,000 pairs have already been donated.

Their first walk was in Nashville, and they've since completed about 120 walks through out the country.

Monday's walk coincided with their current tour titled "Use Your Sole" that they are on with the bands HelloGoodbye, Steel Train, and Sherwood.

"You have to understand the needs of others, and understand the privilege of helping," said Isaac Hanson in an interview. "We realize the value of action over just talking, which is why we've has become so active with Tom's Shoes."

Isaac said that while recording their album, *The Walk*, the brothers took a trip to Africa, which inspired them to think about ways to engage and educate people about the poverty problem there.

At the same time, Taylor happened to be looking for a new pair of comfortable shoes. This sparked the idea that they should partner up with Tom's Shoes. Their hope was that they could take the shoes on tour with them to raise awareness.

After returning from their trip, Taylor was at a party in NYC where he got the number of Blake Mycoskie, the founder of Tom's Shoes. After making many calls and sending numerous emails, the deal was made, and Hanson's relationship with Tom's Shoes began.

Tom's Shoes isn't their only humanitarian effort—the brothers also have an organization called Walk Around the World, which they were also inspired to start after their African trip.

With this organization, they donate one dollar of their own money for every person who participates in the walk, which they do on the day of their concert. The brothers have a goal of completing 24,902 miles, the number of miles it takes to literally walk around the world.

Hanson also released a coffee table book titled Take the Walk that explains their inspiration. Proceeds from the book benefit children in Africa.

Returning from their chilly mile walk down Taylor St., the participants gathered around the brothers to listen to them sing an acoustic version of their song "Great Divide" from their album *The Walk*.

When purchased from iTunes, all proceeds from the song go to the Perinatal HIV Research Unit in Soweto, South Africa—a hospital that the brothers visited while on their trip that helps reduce the transmission of HIV/AIDS to babies.

The admiration was clear on the faces of the fans watching Hanson. Though their biggest commercial success came with their bubblegum hit off the album *Middle of Nowhere* back in '97, they still have a strong and devoted fan base that have followed them through their following four albums. Women in their early 20's were proudly wearing their old, worn-out Hanson t-shirts.

After the walk, while being hustled to get moving by publicists and security people, Isaac seemed eager to continue talking about Hanson's commitment to both Tom's Shoes and Walk Around the World.

"Awareness is great, but taking action is the most important thing," he said while pausing to sign autographs and take a few quick pictures with fans.