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**BITTERSWEET, INC. AND MAUMEE VALLEY HABITAT FOR HUMANITY LAUNCH FUNDRAISING
CAMPAIGNS FOR CHANCE TO WIN UP TO \$75,000 IN ART VAN FURNITURE'S SEVENTH ANNUAL
"ART VAN CHARITY CHALLENGE"**

*120 deserving Midwest charities in race to raise the most money through June 22 for share of
\$375,000 in grants during spirited competition*

WARREN, MI (May 19, 2015) – Fundraising efforts kicked off in earnest yesterday for Bittersweet, Inc. and Maumee Valley Habitat for Humanity, Ohio-based charities vying for grant dollars among 120 Midwest nonprofits in Art Van Furniture's seventh annual "Art Van Charity Challenge." Supporters from far and wide are being encouraged to make a difference *and* a donation during the spirited five week competition which runs from May 18 through June 22. Cindy Crawford, international supermodel, businesswoman, and philanthropist, is serving as the official 2015 "Art Van Charity Challenge" ambassador.

Bittersweet, Inc. in Whitehouse, Ohio works to positively impact the lives of individuals with autism and those whose lives they touch. Along with Maumee Valley Habitat for Humanity, the participating charities focused on children, health care and human services are competing to raise the most money. Of the 120 competing charities in 2015, 100 operate in Michigan, 17 in Chicagoland, two in Ohio and one in Indiana.

The top 10 nonprofits in the "Art Van Charity Challenge" will share \$375,000 prize grants. The first place finisher will receive \$75,000 and grants ranging from \$7,500 to \$65,000 will be awarded to the nine other top fundraising organizations. During the past six years, the Art Van Charity Challenge has generated nearly \$20 million in donations, bestowed \$7 million, and supports 261 charities.

"It is gratifying and inspiring to see what happens during this friendly competition," said Art Van Elslander, chairman and founder of Art Van Furniture. "By working together, we expect to raise over \$2 million to support these wonderful charitable organizations."

The winners will be announced on June 24. All of the participating charities will keep the funds raised during the competition, as well as any additional prizes won such as \$4,000 in bonus challenge money from Art Van Furniture, \$1,000 in Art Van Furniture gift cards, and special prizes like autographed photos of Cindy Crawford and internationally renowned photographer Nigel Barker.

“There are few things in life more empowering than getting involved and giving back to help others,” said Crawford, who lost her brother to leukemia when she was nine years old and helped raise money for the Leukemia Foundation of America as part of her healing process. “I have been devoted for a long time to doing my part to enhance the world.”

Powered by CrowdRise.com, an online charitable fundraising site, the Art Van Charity Challenge raised over \$1 million, including \$260,000 in the final 24 hours and secured \$175,000 of the funds in the final hour during its 2014 campaign, setting a CrowdRise.com record. For more information, including a complete lists of this year’s participating charities, visit artvancharitychallenge.com.

About Art Van Furniture

Art Van Furniture is the Midwest's largest furniture retailer and America's largest independent furniture retailer. The company operates 94 stores throughout Michigan, Illinois, Ohio, and Indiana, including freestanding Art Van PureSleep mattress stores, Art Van Flooring stores, and Art Van Furniture franchise locations as well as a full service e-commerce website. Founded in 1959, the company is family-owned and headquartered in Warren, Michigan. Visit artvan.com for more information.

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