

## Connecting people ...

United Way research\* shows that the number of high poverty neighbourhoods in Toronto has jumped from 30 in 1981, to 120 in 2001. Most of those neighbourhoods are in Toronto's inner suburbs. Most of them have a critical shortage of social services.

Experience from the United States and the United Kingdom reveals that efforts to rebuild and strengthen neighbourhoods are most effective when local residents are engaged, take leadership and responsibility for their community. In Scarborough Village, United Way and the Federal government's initiative Action for Neighbourhood Change (ANC) has tested and witnessed the effectiveness of resident engagement.

It doesn't happen overnight. It doesn't happen suddenly. A stronger healthier neighbourhood is built through a series of small steps—quite separate events—coalescing into a new sense of energy and pride. And for residents, a sense of belonging.

Here are some of the stories from the Scarborough Village neighbourhood.

### **Cricket enthusiasts' love of the game becomes a neighbourhood passion**

"I truly believe in this neighbourhood," says Tully Ghanny, a local resident who moved from Guyana to Canada 30 years ago and who helps coach at the newly-formed Scarborough Village Cricket Club.

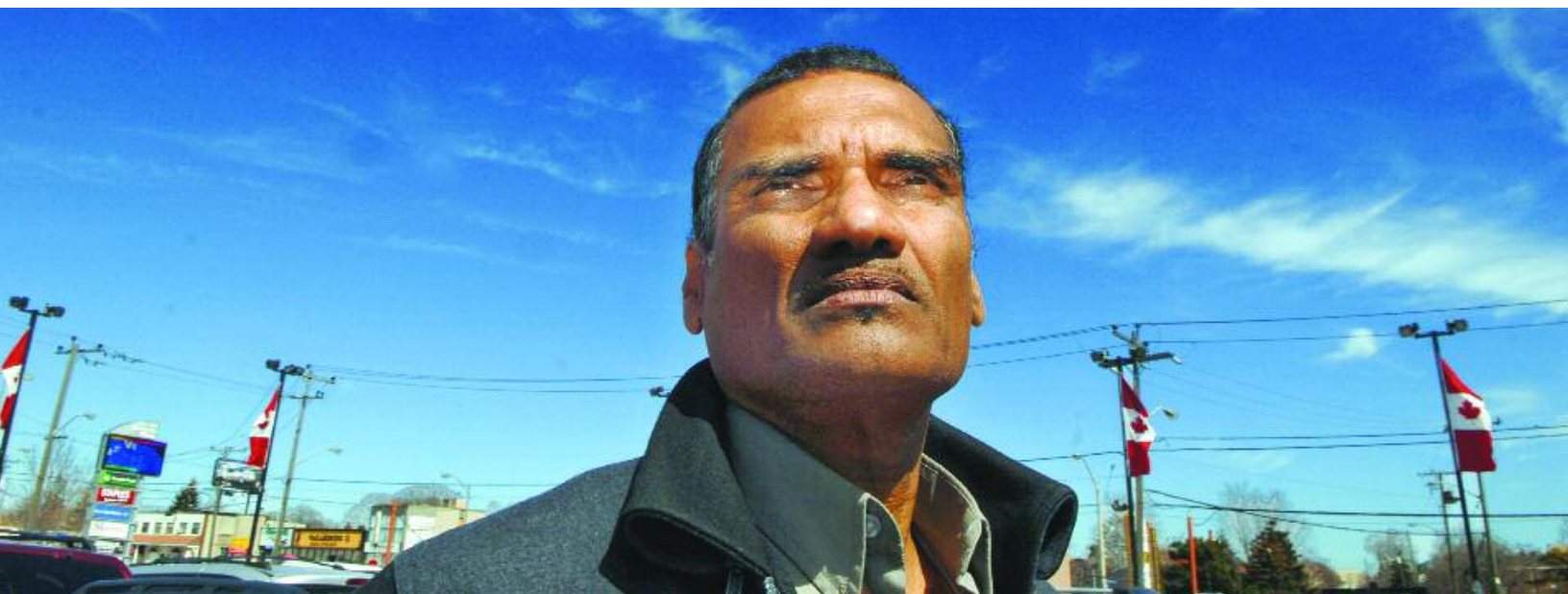
"And I truly believe that this is a great opportunity to create a connection with young people because in some ways the game of cricket is like building bridges. It's a game these kids can talk about with their parents."

In the summer, Scarborough Village held a festival that included a cricket demonstration organized by resident volunteers with support from Parks, Forestry and Recreation staff, and the Boys & Girls Club of East Scarborough. The interest was overwhelming.

ANC enabled residents like Tully, who was interested in sharing his love of this sport, to form a cricket club for youth. Funding for equipment was secured and ANC connected residents with Parks and Recreation to obtain permits to use the local city park. With true community spirit, volunteers worked together to build this opportunity.

Now kids from diverse backgrounds—Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Indian, Afghani, West Indian—come from around the neighbourhood to play in a sport that not only has cultural resonance for them, but also teaches skills such as teamwork, discipline and leadership.

Their parents are also coming together to watch their children play the familiar game. From the sidelines, stories, experiences and laughs are shared—and connections are made. On the cricket pitch, it isn't long before residents begin to feel a sense of community.



## ... to build strong neighbourhoods

### **Partnerships and a theatre school are catalysts for change**

The driver behind ANC initiatives like the Scarborough Village Cricket Club is the partnerships it inspires.

It was also the catalyst behind the creation of the Theatre School for Youth in Scarborough Village which offers young people workshops in acting, dance, singing and percussion as well as focusing on skills such as punctuality, teamwork and managing personal challenges.

But it really did take a village to make the youth theatre project a reality.

United Way secured TD Bank as a funder for the program and helped connect ANC and YOUTHLINK®, a United Way agency, to the project. And because residents were looking for more opportunities for young people, United Way and ANC brought in Denise Matthews of Suite Life Productions to coordinate the program. Better still, the Scarborough Village Community Centre became the venue for the program, making the space more accessible to youth.

### **Homework clubs strengthen academic skills and also ties within the neighbourhood**

Often strengthening neighbourhoods is about listening to what residents want for their children. Many residents

were looking for tutoring and homework support and ANC helped connect these residents with service providers and volunteers to get the initiatives off the ground.

Homework clubs are now led by a number of community volunteers and run out of local Toronto Community Housing buildings and co-ops. Clubs like the one at Gardenview Co-op.

At Gardenview, parents felt disconnected from the school system but recognized that after-school tutoring could fill the gap in their children's education. ANC linked Frontier College to the residents of Gardenview and got the club started. Frontier College also offered literacy testing for children outside of school, and parents—concerned about the stigma testing at school may create—were receptive to the idea. As a result, personalized learning programs were developed and trust was built. Now, the residents are connected with each other and to service providers. Children are learning and parents are gaining confidence in their ability to transform their neighbourhoods.

Step by step, a series of events like these build momentum and the result is a stronger, healthier neighbourhood.

*\*Taken from Poverty by Postal Code: The Geography of Neighbourhood Poverty, 1981 – 2001, Executive Summary, published by United Way of Greater Toronto, 2004.*

*Often strengthening neighbourhoods is about listening to what residents want for their children.*



*A homework club in Scarborough Village attracts children and youth from across the neighbourhood, enabling them to access critical academic support.*

*With the support of her mentor from the Academic Mentoring Program at the Boys & Girls Club of East Scarborough, this young woman is not only completing her math homework, she's also building her self-esteem and working toward achieving her personal and academic goals.*



# Connecting youth ... to opportunities

## **Mentoring programs offer a positive environment for learning and growth**

For Rachelle Litchmoore, born in Jamaica, education was always the key to a productive life.

“It’s what my parents instilled in me from day one and what I want to give back to kids who need the confidence and self-esteem to go on to university or college.”

A fourth-year university student at the University of Toronto and volunteer with IMANI: The Black Students’ Alliance, a student club at the University of Toronto-Scarborough Campus, Rachelle is also a mentor at the Boys & Girls Club of East Scarborough. IMANI and Boys & Girls Club work in partnership to offer today’s at-risk youth alternatives to the guns and gangs culture by offering programs like the Academic Mentorship Program.

Supported by United Way, programs like these aim at prevention and intervention by giving Toronto’s youth the means and opportunity to build productive lives.

“If I weren’t here every day after school, I’d be hanging around and getting into trouble,” admits twelve-year-old Gavin Pierce who has been coming to the Galloway and Kingston Road area club for the past four years. “I get help with my homework. They help me understand math, not by giving me answers but by encouraging me to think for myself.”

## **Taking action and finding solutions to youth alienation**

Partnering with governments, business, foundations, school boards and other organizations, United Way is finding solutions to youth alienation by providing programs to engage young people—programs that promote skills training, education, athletics, the arts and social activities.

The Youth Challenge Fund (YCF), a public and private sector initiative introduced by the Ontario government and administered by United Way to invest in youth-based programs across Toronto, announced its first round of grants totaling \$3.5 million to support programs for at-risk youth in the 13 priority neighbourhoods.

## **Engage youth through the arts and leaders develop**

The Toronto Arts Council Foundation and Art Reach Toronto are exactly the kind of United Way partnerships

that work to inspire young people to lead, participate in and contribute to their communities through arts and culture. Supported by United Way, grants of up to \$10,000 are provided to arts programs, many of which are focused on marginalized young people in high-poverty neighbourhoods. These programs—visual arts, theatre, dance and spoken word poetry—engage youth through the development of new skills, encouraging leadership abilities and improving their level of civic engagement and connection to the community.

The Newcomer Theatre Project run by CultureLink Settlement Services, located at King and Jameson Avenue, employed 13 youth from refugee and immigrant backgrounds over the summer and part-time during the year to learn theatre skills and create an original play—which they presented to their communities, including a performance for over 400 people at The Helen Gardiner Phelan Playhouse at the University of Toronto.

“It was a resounding success,” says Anver Garda, Executive Director with CultureLink. “It was not only an amazing production but represented such an amazing transformation in the young people themselves. They began with limited theatre knowledge, low self-confidence and were discouraged by their lack of fluent English. Six months later they are still talking about how the summer changed their lives.”

Those kind of changes can last a lifetime. And they can be heard in the soft voice of Christina Fullerton, 17, who explains how much she loves the time she spends at the Boys & Girls Club of East Scarborough.

I love everything about it. They help you here with everything.” She pauses. “And it helps me feel better about myself.”

*Partnering with governments, business, foundations, school boards and other organizations, United Way is finding solutions to youth alienation.*

## Connecting newcomers ...

### Programs for newcomers help break down barriers to successful settlement and economic integration

Juan Orozco always assumed that his international experience as an electrical engineer and teacher would take him anywhere. That's why in the fall of 2001, undaunted by stories he had heard about educated immigrants having to settle for low-paying jobs, he came looking for a new life in Canada.

"I was inspired by the spirit of Pierre Trudeau, his respect and vision of a multicultural Canada," said Juan. "I wanted to challenge my destiny."

Although his first efforts to find a job here were unsuccessful, he was determined to succeed. He focused on finding an electrical engineering position and began the process of becoming an accredited engineer in his new country, while he and his wife worked odd jobs to make ends meet. Then he heard about Skills for Change, a United Way agency committed to helping newcomers

find meaningful employment and featuring programs that prepare foreign-trained professionals for the Canadian workforce.

What happened next was what United Way hopes to see—a newcomer to the city able to access a range of programs in order to help fulfill his potential and promise.

Through Skills for Change, Juan enrolled in courses to upgrade his English skills and knowledge of Canadian business practices. He also learned how to effectively update his resume, job search and interview with prospective employers, all the while working closely alongside the many volunteers and employees at the agency.

After seven months Juan was hired at an engineering firm. He hasn't looked back and he hasn't forgotten. To give back to his new community, he now voluntarily operates a successful mentoring program out of his home for foreign-trained engineers.

*"The most important thing for new immigrants is emotional support and mentorship. I am grateful to Skills for Change for providing this to me. The people there inspired me and are the reason why I volunteer my time to help other newcomers," says Juan Orozco.*



## ... to their potential and promise

### **A women's integration program forges connections and eases feelings of isolation**

Getting newcomers—particularly women who often find themselves isolated at home with young children—to fulfill their potential is the goal of the Immigrant Women Integration Program (IWIP), a United Way program delivered through the Centre for Community Learning and Development, located at Gerrard St. and Parliament St. .

This year-long program takes participants through an orientation to services and agencies around Toronto, training them in the human rights code, personal management skills, board governance, leadership training, and how to design and deliver workshops. The trainees then take these skills back into their communities, where they sit on boards of local agencies and deliver workshops for community groups.

Ma Rong arrived from China in 2005, was referred to the IWIP a few months later, and graduated from the program in the summer of 2006. She has led workshops in the Regent Park, Moss Park and Jamestown neighbourhoods on human rights, elections, and child development and is now employed at the Centre for Community Learning and Development, providing administrative support and technical assistance.

"I'm a real people person and when I moved to Toronto, I wanted very much to help people in my new community," says Ma Rong. "This program helped me to do that and to find the right direction to further my career."

### **For newcomers to Canada, small steps can lead to big change**

For Beisa, United Way agency College Montrose Children's Place, located at College St. and Montrose Ave., was her conduit to the outside world.

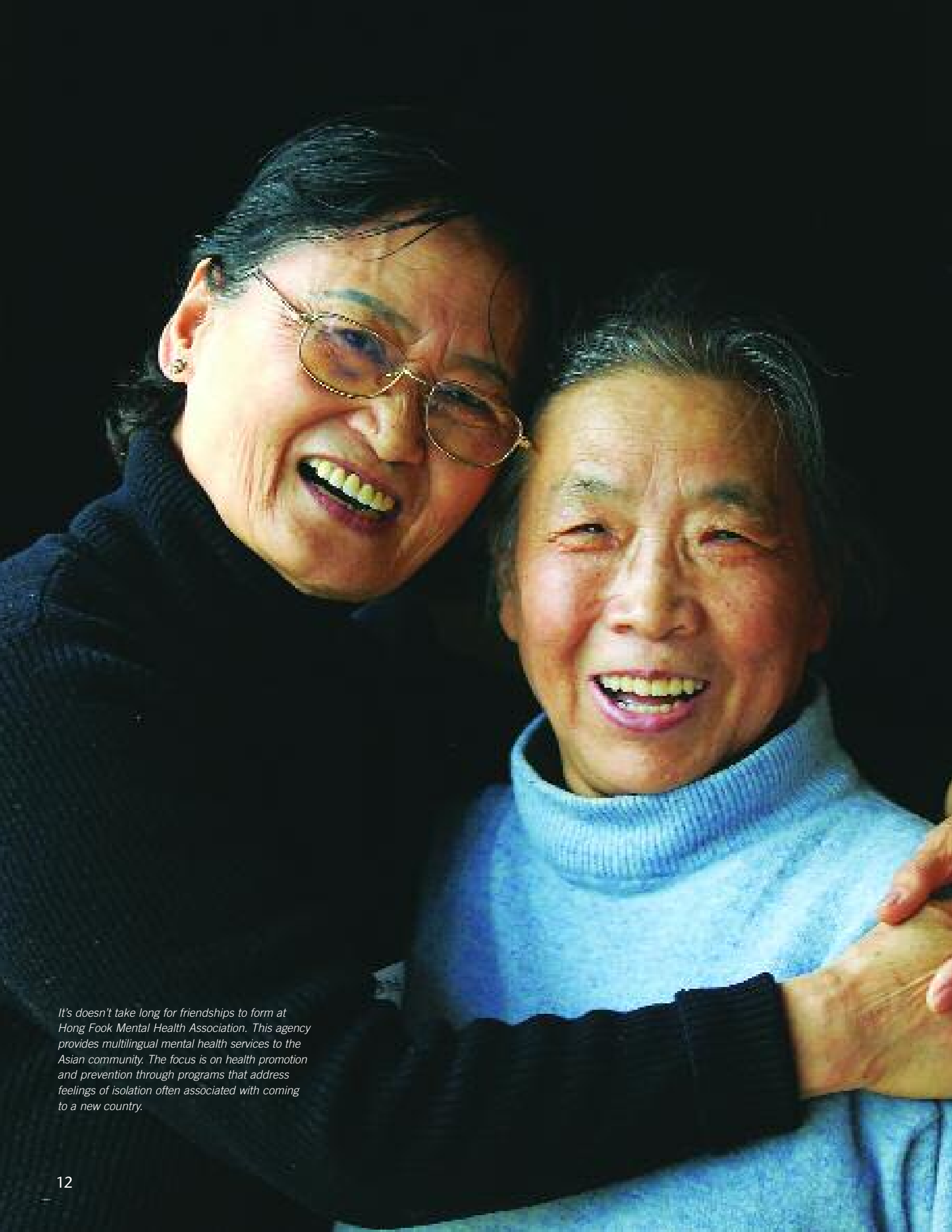
"I was a single mom, looking after my elderly parents and College Montrose Children's Place was the only light during what were gloomy, depressing days."

A family resource and early childhood intervention agency that supports newcomers, particularly in the Somali community, College Montrose became a stepping stone for Beisa to climb out of her isolation.

"At first I would venture from the apartment and take my young son to daycare," she remembers. "I started meeting my neighbours, having coffee with them on Sunday mornings. And then I was asked to be on the advisory committee where I helped make changes. Now I'm on the Board and it has been a wonderful experience," she adds. "The whole world looks different to me now."



*Mother and child share a quiet moment over a good book at College Montrose Children's Place, a family resource and early childhood intervention agency that supports newcomers.*



*It's doesn't take long for friendships to form at Hong Fook Mental Health Association. This agency provides multilingual mental health services to the Asian community. The focus is on health promotion and prevention through programs that address feelings of isolation often associated with coming to a new country.*

# Connecting ... with a network of 200 health & social service agencies

## When people work together, greater impact is achieved

“This is euphoria. Every day I get up and say thank you. I’ve got an education, a job, a roof over my head and healthy kids.”

For Karen Kindness, euphoria is the result of hard work and Homeward Bound, a United Way funded program that moved her from a shelter into transitional housing with daycare, tutoring, internships—and a job with BMO Bank of Montreal at the end.

Developed by Woodgreen Community Services at Queen St. and Logan Ave., Homeward Bound is a village built to raise a child, a low-rise apartment-style complex housing a community of 32 mothers and their children who had formerly been living in shelters.

Here they benefit from on-site daycare, computer training, counselling and tutoring as well as the opportunity to pursue a college degree, internships in their field and a guaranteed job at the end if they successfully complete the program.

“This experience has proven that people do care and that there is help available,” explains Karen. “This is a rigorous program for which you have to qualify and work—but what an impact it can make on your life.”

Karen and her children are representative of the many individuals who have survived and thrived from the support and strength of a network of 200 health and social services agencies supported by United Way in our city.

## Creating a better, safer, stronger city for us all

From organizations like Mid-Toronto Community Services at College St. and Beverly St., that helps adults and seniors cope with illness and disabilities, to St. Christopher House, a multi-service neighbourhood centre at King St. and Shaw St. that helps people in the community access information on income security and financial planning—the goal is a safer and healthier city for everyone.

“I became ill, my health deteriorated and I could no longer negotiate stairs,” explains William Dumbleton who found himself looking to Mid-Toronto Community Services to help him find an appropriate home. “They found me a place where I can still have my independence and freedom. You can’t imagine what a relief that was.”

*“This experience has proven that people do care and that there is help available,” explains Karen Kindness.*

## Providing opportunities to share experiences and enlarge social networks strengthens communities

Helen Li is a volunteer at Hong Fook, a Community Mental Health Agency with a Health Promotion program as one of the key components of their outreach strategy. Hong Fook supports Toronto’s Cambodian, Korean, Vietnamese, and Chinese communities—including Cantonese and Mandarin speaking people from Taiwan and Mainland China—and works to respond to issues in inner suburban neighbourhoods. A newcomer herself, Helen personally understands what it means to feel alone in a strange country.

“You left your family and your history behind,” she explains, “and you need a network with which to share your feelings and connect with others in the same circumstances.”

After completing the “Holistic Health Peer Leadership” training program at Hong Fook, held weekly, Helen now facilitates groups of 20 or so participants, watching them reach out to each other to make friends and enlarge their networks.

“I like this program because I have a place to share my experiences and it increases my sense of belonging and responsibility to my community. As newcomers, we are in the same boat, sharing the same experiences. The most gratifying feeling is that I am contributing to the community.”

# Connecting ...

## *Community Impact Report*



*Francesca Shaw*

Francesca Shaw, Chair,  
Community Impact Committee

With your support, United Way of Greater Toronto is well on its way to becoming a community impact organization. The Community Impact Committee (CIC), established in 2005, continued this year to guide our strategic plan and increase our impact in the community through research, partnerships, convening, funding and advocacy. Key to this undertaking is the Allocations and Agency Services Committee, which oversees the allocation of funds raised and capacity building within our member agencies, as well as the Research, Policy and Priorities Committee, which provides governance oversight of our policy and advocacy work.



Amy Tong, Chair, Allocations  
and Agency Services  
Committee



John Hinds, Chair, Research,  
Policy and Priorities  
Committee

**Funding for impact** – We had a remarkable 50th year. United Way invested over \$59 million in a network of 200 health and social services agencies, providing agencies with core operating and program funding to deliver vital services that impact every area of our city. Over \$1.9 million was distributed to the community through joint United Way, government and foundation partnerships, in addition to \$4 million of new funding to member and grant-funded agencies.

In 2006, we welcomed York Community Services (YCS) as a new United Way of Greater Toronto agency. The agency works to strengthen the lives of newcomers, youth, seniors and people who are homeless, at-risk or living with mental health issues. The agency is located in the former City of York.

Over 75 per cent of the new dollars allocated in 2006 went to United Way priority areas—building strong neighbourhoods and community infrastructure in inner suburban neighbourhoods, creating opportunities for youth and helping newcomers fulfill their potential and promise.

We continue to build on our work in the inner suburbs and the 13 priority neighbourhoods identified by the City of Toronto and United Way. Expanding on the highlights described on page 4, the following events marked another exciting year:

## ... for maximum community impact



Action for Neighbourhood Change Launch in Eglinton East/Kennedy Park. Brad Duguid, MPP, Scarborough Centre; Carol Dlupsch, Clinical Coordinator, West Hill Community Services; John Elliot, Program Director, Community Health, West Hill Community Services; Nayla Rhaman; Frances Lankin, President and CEO, United Way of Greater Toronto; Mayor David Miller; Kelly Meighen; Don Johnson; George Smitherman, Minister of Health and Long Term Care; Michael Thompson, MPP, Scarborough Centre; Bas Balkissoon, MPP, Scarborough Rouge River.

### Action for Neighbourhood Change (ANC) launched

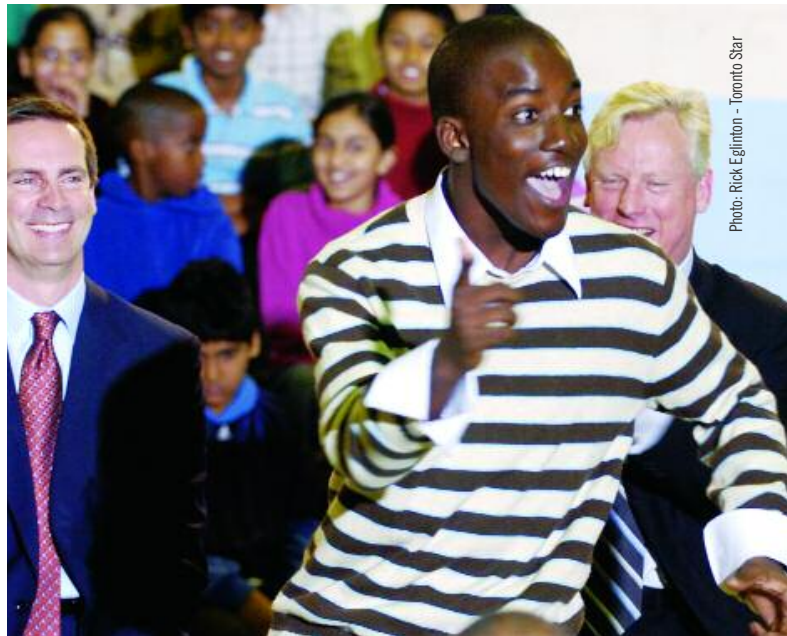
On October 2, United Way announced the opening of four ANC sites with a launch event at the Eastown Plaza in Eglinton East/Kennedy Park—the site of our first community hub. The launch was especially significant as the hub will also house a new community health centre—one of nine announced by the McGuinty government targeting the 13 priority neighbourhoods. West Hill Community Health Centre, a multi-service United Way member agency, will operate the hub facility in the Eglinton Avenue and Brimley Road area.

The event was attended by George Smitherman, Ontario Minister of Health and Long Term Care; Mayor David Miller, City of Toronto; Frances Lankin, President and CEO, United Way of Greater Toronto, and a host of community partners and major donors—including Don and Anna Johnson, who gave \$1 million to fund the hub facility, and Kelly Meighen, who represented the T.R. Meighen Family Foundation, which donated \$500,000 to support youth initiatives in priority neighbourhoods.

**Creating opportunities for youth** – United Way launched a number of initiatives and programs to engage youth to succeed in school, to become community

leaders, and to provide them with alternatives to guns and gangs. Initiatives included: ArtReach Toronto, a program designed to support youth-led art projects and Bridge to Success, a partnership with the Toronto District School Board to improve the rates of post-secondary education in Jamestown.

The Youth Challenge Fund (YCF) was announced on December 14 at a launch event in Flemington Park. There to participate in the announcement were Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty; Mayor David Miller, City of Toronto; Kathleen Wynne, Ontario Minister of Education; Michael Clemons, YCF Chair; and Frances Lankin, President and CEO, United Way of Greater Toronto. Although not in attendance, John Hunkin and Susan Crocker, who donated \$1 million to the Fund, were recognized for their generous contribution.



Premier McGuinty and Mayor Miller enjoy a dance performance by Shamier Anderson at Flemington Park where YCF took an important step forward.

### Helping newcomers fulfill their potential and promise

The United Way's Building Agency Capacity (BAC) program, offered in partnership with Maytree and the Ontario Trillium Foundation, completed its three-year pilot. BAC's goal was to increase the effectiveness of community-based social service agencies that provide services to immigrants and refugees in underserved communities. The program provided grants to implement a range of organizational development activities such as training, coaching and mentoring.

## Connecting ... for maximum community impact *continued*

**Building a stronger sector** – For the second successful year, the next generation of leaders for our sector graduated from the Emerging Leaders program. The program, a partnership with York University's Schulich School of Business and the Metcalf Foundation, was designed to develop strong future leaders for the social services sector and to create leaders who reflect Toronto's rich cultural diversity.



Photo: Gilberto Prinste

*These graduates of the United Way's Emerging Leaders program are all smiles.*

### *Emerging Leaders 2006 Graduating Class*

*Standing left to right: Zestaline Kim, Carol Klupsch, Tom Walker, Frank Hei Ching Chu, Joanna Reynolds, Nancy Reiner, Courtnay McFarlane, Katina Watson, Paulos Gebreyesus, Christine Miranda, John Methven, Papri Halder, Lydia Sai-Chew, Adela Colhon, Cherie Miller  
Seated left to right: Jennifer Robinson, Trudy Small, Izzie Jones, Junie Facey, Diane Walter, Farhana Solanki, Joe Stapleton, Jasmine Thibault*

**Research and public policy** – United Way was the proud recipient of an 2006 Arthur Kroeger College Award in the Policy Leadership category, which honours those who serve as a model to others on how to define and consider an issue, discern its components, and then successfully advance the public policy process.



Photo: Arthur Kroeger College of Public Affairs, Carleton University

*Recipients of the 2006 Arthur Kroeger College Awards for Public Affairs*

*Pictured from left to right: Keith Martell, Chairman, First Nations Bank; Rick Mercer, CBC personality; Frances Lankin, Ken Lyotier, United We Can Bottle Depot; Alan Landsberg (on behalf of Stephen Lewis, UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for HIV/AIDS in Africa).*