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YOUTH CHALLENGE FUND ANNOUNCES SECOND ROUND FUNDING TO SUPPORT TORONTO'S YOUTH

Investments will target programs for youth in Toronto's most underserved areas

TORONTO, April 23, 2007 – Dance, rhythm and music will soon be heard vibrating against a newly designed and constructed youth space at Tropicana Community Services Organization. The project, *"Dance Mahali"*, will engage community youth in the planning and development of a space that will give them an artistic and creative outlet - all made possible by the Youth Challenge Fund. Toronto's Youth Challenge Fund (YCF) today announced over \$4.4 million of funding for their second round of investments in youth-based projects across Toronto.

The Fund received 169 applications for youth-centred programming and approved 26 organizations to help support their work with youth in the city's 13 priority neighbourhoods. Projects funded in this second round are a diverse and broad mix of programming that range from supporting the development of young women's self esteem, to cultivating and engaging youth leadership through agricultural training and skills development.

"Today marks another significant step in a journey of prudence and passion to assist youth in our most underserved communities," said Michael Clemons, Chair of the Youth Challenge Fund. "The destination is a place where all youth in our priority neighbourhoods feel respected, valued and supported. Today's announcement will bring some of our youth to this place, and start others on the journey."

Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty established the Youth Challenge Fund in 2006 as a direct response to growing concerns related to youth violence and gang involvement across Toronto. When the Fund was announced, the Premier issued a challenge to the community to raise an additional \$15 million that the Province will match, creating a total potential investment of \$45 million for youth and youth-based projects.

"When one of our young people chooses the path of hope and opportunity, that's something we can all be proud of," said Premier Dalton McGuinty. "We believe in our young people. We believe that given the right opportunities, they will make the right choices. We're going to do everything we can to make sure these opportunities are available."

Applications received by YCF staff are reviewed and those meeting the granting criteria are forwarded to YCF Grant Review Committees. Each advisory body has representation from all sections in the community including youth, YCF board members, priority neighbourhoods and individuals with grant-making experience. The ultimate decision for projects that will receive funding rests with the YCF Board of Directors.

"The Youth Challenge Fund has not only helped us fund our online community and mentorship program, but they have also connected us with other passionate, youth-led projects during our current development stage. In the delivery of our program we will strive to connect, mobilize and strengthen the youth community in our neighbourhoods," said first round funding recipient Dev Aujla, Executive Director, DreamNow. DreamNow has created an online community and mentorship program for youth in the priority neighborhoods.

"Our government is determined to help our youth harness their talents and realize their potential," said Mary Anne Chambers, Minister of Children and Youth Services. "Through our continued work and investments within communities, we will be able to provide the right supports and access to opportunity so our youth can be successful."

The Youth Challenge Fund builds on the Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy, the United Way and City of Toronto's plan to address the lack of programs and services in Toronto's most under-served neighbourhoods. "After a thorough community governance process, the programs selected for YCF funding represent a unique blend of innovation and effectiveness in directing resources and effort to the issues facing youth today," said Frances Lankin, President and CEO, United Way of Greater Toronto. "United Way continues to support the Youth Challenge Fund through our on-going fundraising efforts and trusteeship of the Fund. Donors to YCF are excited about the possibilities of investing in the future of our city's youth, building better neighbourhoods and a better city." YCF is directing its resources toward projects within the 13 priority neighbourhoods identified in the Strategy as most in need of support.

Funds are being granted to youth programming in the targeted 13 priority neighbourhoods of Jamestown, Jane-Finch, Weston-Mount Dennis, Lawrence Heights, Westminster-Branson, Crescent Town, Flemingdon Park-Victoria Village, Steeles-L'Amoreaux, Dorset Park, Eglinton East-Kennedy Park, Scarborough Village, Kingston-Galloway, and Malvern.

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