

BACKGROUND

About Beasley Neighbourhood

- Beasley is home to more than 5,000 residents, and spans 42 inner-city blocks that run from James Street east to Wellington, and from Main Street north to the railway tracks.
- The neighbourhood is culturally diverse, including people from 41 different countries.
- Fifty-six per cent of all Beasley residents and 66 per cent of single parent families in Beasley are living below the Statistics Canada low income cut off.
- Beasley has been classified by Statistics Canada as the 15th most distressed of 4,180 urban areas in Canada. The neighbourhood's poverty rate is two and a half times higher than the city average.
- The unemployment rate is near 45 per cent, and the average household income in Beasley is less than half of Hamilton's average.
- There are few resources and little play space in Beasley accommodating to families with young children. Similarly, early learning programming is available in Beasley only on a limited basis.

About Hamilton Community Foundation

- Hamilton Community Foundation (HCF), through the generosity of its donors, is able to be a leader, catalyst and resource in addressing one of Hamilton's most pressing problems: poverty.
- In 2002, HCF launched a five-year initiative, "*Growing Roots...Strengthening Neighbourhoods*," taking place in four of Hamilton's most challenged neighbourhoods: Beasley, Lansdale, McQuesten East and McQuesten West. The program's purpose is to help build the capacity and improve quality of life for citizens in these neighbourhoods.
- With the support of the Neighbourhood Program Coordinator, groups of residents are supported in identifying and implementing neighbourhood projects. Small grants are available from the Foundation to support these initiatives. In the past year more than \$17,000 in small grants were provided by HCF for Beasley neighbourhood projects, such as:
 - The David Hillen Memorial Garden and Tool Lending Shed: This project celebrates David Hillen and the Cannon Street beautification project he started. A "tool lending shed" is shared between community members to maintain Cannon's streetscape.
 - Beasley Legal Evening: The Beasley neighbourhood held an information session to inform recent immigrants about their legal rights and responsibilities.
 - GAAT Zone 2 Sky Dragon: In the Sudanese Nuer dialect, "gaat" means "children." This is a social club for Sudanese families living in the downtown core. It offers a safe place for Sudanese families to share their culture and customs with each other and with other Beasley residents.
- Another major initiative of HCF is *Tackling Poverty Together* - a commitment of \$3 million over four years (2004-2007) to support projects related to poverty reduction, prevention and alleviation.
- HCF is also the co-convenor of the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction. Formed in May 2005, the Roundtable brings together people from all sectors (business, education, social services, government and voluntary sectors, and people themselves living in poverty) with the shared aspiration of "Making Hamilton the Best Place to Raise a Child."

About Beasley Community Centre

- A one-room facility owned by the City of Hamilton on Elgin Street, adjacent to Dr. J. Edgar Davey School on Ferguson Street.
- Prior to the donation, a parenting program focusing on infant/toddler stimulation was run at Beasley Community Centre by Wesley Urban Ministries twice a week, for a total of four hours. No other early childhood development or parenting program was available in the neighbourhood.
- In early May 2007, the centre's hours of operation increased and programming expanded as a result of the donation. It's now open from 9 a.m. - 3 p.m., Monday and Thursday, and 10 a.m. - 1 p.m., Saturday and Sunday. The hours of operation are expected to increase again as more programs are added.
- In addition to the parenting program, other new services include:
 - A nutrition program where residents learn to make a nutritious and low-cost lunch.
 - Regular visits from a public health nurse.
 - In July, an Early Identification Clinic will begin, screening for speech, hearing, vision, dental or overall childhood development issues.
 - A school readiness program will begin in summer, helping children registered for kindergarten to improve their literacy, numeracy and social skills.
- An "engagement project" led by Wesley Urban Ministries will identify other programs or services for Beasley Community Centre. "We've started with a small menu of services and it will grow as we see what the community wants," says Paul Johnson, Executive Director of Wesley Urban Ministries. "We are really at the exploratory stage."
- The Community Health Bus has now resumed service at the Beasley Community Centre. The bus provides free dental and public health services for people of all ages.