



Beasley Neighbourhood Announcement

June 25, 2007, from 10:30 a.m. to noon

Remarks for Carolyn Milne:

Good morning. I would like to echo Alan's words of welcome and thank you for being here to celebrate with us this morning.

And a celebration it is, because today Hamilton Community Foundation is proud to announce the outstanding gift of one million dollars to support early childhood learning and development programs here in the Beasley neighbourhood.

This gift has been made by a local couple who have asked to remain anonymous. They are retired educators, quiet people, who are not seeking the limelight, but who want to make a difference – a real and sustainable difference - in the lives of children. And they are sharing their good fortune to do just that.

This couple's gift is unique because it's aimed at programs in one of Hamilton's most challenging neighbourhoods, with the specific goal of helping children ages 0 to 6 with their early development.

How did this come about? First, I want to share with you a couple of points about the donors. These donors are *knowledgeable!*

- They know that research points conclusively to the long-term benefits for children when they are exposed to quality early learning.
- They have followed the work of the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction, and the wonderful poverty series being run by the Hamilton Spectator.
- They embrace the goal, defined by the Roundtable, of making Hamilton the best place to raise a child.

This couple was moved to make their gift after reading in the Spectator last spring that the federal government was canceling the planned National Child Care Program, and that this decision would mean a loss of more than 1,400 planned child care spaces.

They are big proponents of quality early learning and they were deeply concerned about what this cancellation would do to our community. They asked themselves, “What can we do?”

They were referred to Hamilton Community Foundation and we commissioned a study to look at different options for their generosity. Because the Foundation has had community development programs in Beasley, and other challenged neighbourhoods, for several years now, we knew that this neighbourhood had a real gap when it came to early learning. We presented a number of options to the donors, and they chose to fund programs and services for pre-school children and their parents.

Do you know that song – the one that the lotteries use – “If I had a million dollars”? Let me tell you what a million dollars buys for this neighbourhood, for its children and their parents, and for the future.

The programs will be held here at the Beasley Community Centre under the leadership of Wesley Urban Ministries. There will be a range of early-years services, starting with a parent-child drop-in centre. It will also be a hub for other resources in the community, including child care, early literacy programs and health care. Parents can come in and learn how to make a nutritious meal. There will be regular visits from a public health nurse. An early identification clinic will screen for children’s developmental or medical problems. And yes, the Community Health Bus has resumed service in Beasley.

This centre has already expanded its hours and its programming, and more services will come down the road. One of the exciting things about these programs is that neighbourhood residents will play a big part in planning them, and Paul Johnson of Wesley Urban Ministries will tell you more about that in a minute.

This one million dollar donation is expected to support programming and outreach within the Beasley community for approximately three years. We are very confident that long-term funding to sustain this wonderful start will be found.

I'll close by saying we are so proud to be part of a community like Hamilton. We can mobilize like no one else. It started a year ago with two people who had a big concern – and here's where we are today.

Tomorrow is so much brighter, for so many, thanks to their caring, and to their generosity.

Thank you again for being part of this very important celebration with us.