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New funding aims at providing “stimulus package” against impact of economic downturn

(Hamilton) – Hamilton Community Foundation (HCF) today announced \$1 million in new grant opportunities to support its ongoing work to reduce poverty in Hamilton. Some \$150,000 of the funds will go to responding to needs created by the economic downturn.

The funds represent a second year of granting available through HCF’s Tackling Poverty Together (TPT) program, a five-year, \$5 million initiative. The grant opportunities will continue to focus on anti-poverty work in six key neighbourhoods, and broader programs to address systems and policies that prevent people from moving out of poverty.

“Since Hamilton Community Foundation’s focused commitment to this issue started in 2004, we have seen meaningful impact in helping Hamiltonians along the path out of poverty. These new opportunities support work that builds on the successes seen so far,” says Sheree Meredith, Vice-President of Grants and Community Initiatives. “For instance more than 1,200 children received academic and literacy help, through TPT’s first phase. This is a critical poverty prevention strategy, because we know that adults with low literacy are twice as likely to be unemployed. Statistics Canada tells us that each additional year of education a person receives is worth an additional 8.3 percent on their paycheques, and there are also societal benefits in terms of increased labour productivity and GDP.”

Carolyn Milne, HCF’s President and CEO says that reports as of last month, show that over 25,000 people have been reached through TPT, with many positive results. Despite the progress however, she says poverty still remains one of Hamilton’s most critical issues, particularly in the current economy.

“Research, experience and the results show that we need to keep investing in prevention and reduction programs for real and lasting solutions,” says Ms. Milne. “At the same time, we know there are immediate needs created by the downturn, for example, food security, housing and employment. We also know that meeting these basic requirements can be a catalyst to engaging people in other programs such as employment readiness. Accordingly, the Foundation has committed \$150,000 to parallel the notion of a ‘stimulus package’ for innovative and practical solutions to these needs.”



HCF's \$1 million investment into the community will also include funds designated to support ongoing poverty-reduction programs that work within its priorities of youth, education and citizen engagement. These programs will be led by four organizations: Hamilton-Wentworth and Hamilton Wentworth Catholic District School Boards, Environment Hamilton, the YMCA's Youth Engagement and Action Hamilton and Wesley Urban Ministries.

"For example, the funds will enable the school boards to expand programs to high-needs schools across the city," says Sheree Meredith. "These are programs that help answer basic needs such as nutrition, and also those that level the playing field on things like access to field trips. The grants also help these organizations to expand poverty-reduction strategies that have an environmental impact, such as helping low-income households to reduce heating costs,"

Grant applications are due April 3, 2009, and are reviewed by the Foundation's TPT advisory committee which is made up of board members and volunteers from a broad range of the public. Decisions will be announced in June.

Hamilton Community Foundation was founded in 1954. Through HCF, donors achieve their philanthropic goals by giving back to their community in ways that mean most to them. HCF also brings people together to convene solutions to Hamilton's most pressing challenges, such as poverty, youth and citizen engagement and environmental protection. HCF has total assets of approximately \$120 million and since it was founded, has made grants to our community totalling more than \$51 million. Last year, through the generosity of its donors, Hamilton Community Foundation made grants of approximately \$6.2 million to Hamilton organizations involved in health, social services, arts, environment, education and recreation.

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(Backgrounder Attached)

CONTACT:

Sheree Meredith, Vice-President – Grants & Community Initiatives
Carolyn Milne, President & CEO
Hamilton Community Foundation
905-523-5600

BACKGROUND: New grant opportunity from Hamilton Community Foundation

Overview

Tackling Poverty Together II ("TPT II") is a five-year, \$5 million initiative (2008-2013) deepening HCF's ongoing work to reduce poverty in Hamilton. It represents the second phase of HCF's "Tackling Poverty Together" commitment to devote the majority of its unrestricted funds to alleviating, preventing and reducing poverty in Hamilton. Just over \$3.4 million was awarded in TPT I which ran from 2004 to 2007; together the program's two phases represent a total \$8.4 million investment in anti-poverty initiatives.

TPT II works to reduce poverty using a dual strategy:

1. Support for programs offered in neighbourhoods identified as high needs, and which have the capacity for collaboration between neighbourhood partners such as community agencies, businesses, public institutions such as schools and faith-based organizations, and citizens. This has been proven as an effective way to alleviate, reduce and prevent poverty.
2. Support for broader poverty reduction programs that address policy or systems change or support target populations which could not be addressed in a geographic model e.g. seniors. These are known as "*foundational grants*".

Selected Results from Tackling Poverty Together (January 2009)

Evaluating the impact that grants are making toward reducing poverty in Hamilton is an important aspect of TPT. From reports received as of January 2009, examples of impact to date include:

- ***1,143 disadvantaged children and youth were provided with free recreational programming.***
Importance: A McMaster University study on recreational services for children on social assistance showed that these services paid for themselves within one year through reduced use of professional and probationary services. By four years, they cut in half the cost of children and youth's use of all other health and social services – for example, recreational services resulted in lower use of children's aid, specialists, emergency, physiotherapy, psychologists, public health and nursing services.
- ***89 young parents received services related to quality early learning for their children and parenting skills for themselves.***
Importance: Economists have determined that the benefits of early investment in children are incalculable in terms of savings to society. Research by Nobel prize-winning economist, for example, showed the return to society (for example through lower social service costs, increased spending and government revenue etc.) on early childhood development is at least 8 to 1 for every dollar invested...higher than for education and training at any other time of life.
- ***202 at risk youth received assistance with academic upgrading or pre-employment skill training; 43 at risk students were helped to stay in school by linking them with part-time employment.***
Importance: Statistics show that 85 percent of income assistance is directed to people who have not completed high school. There is a cumulative lifetime benefit to society of \$400,000 for each graduate of a program designed to keep youth in school and support the transition to post-secondary education.
- ***500 people with disabilities are now receiving the Special Diet Benefit, helping them access some \$900,000 to which they are entitled. In addition, 4,000 seniors have become aware of financial benefits to which they may be entitled.***
Importance: Studies have shown that only a small minority of seniors using food banks were receiving the income supplements to which they were entitled, including the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) and the Canada Pension Plan. The average monthly payment to a single person for GIS is \$452, an annual income boost of \$5,424 for each person. For seniors who are entitled to, but do not receive GIS, it not only means they have lower income than they should, but also, that they may not be receiving drug plans, home care assistance and other subsidies available based on their receipt of the GIS.

Available Granting for 2009-010

For 2009-010, the second year of granting from TPT II, \$1 million will be distributed by Hamilton Community Foundation:

1. **Approximately \$400,000 to an open call for proposals for services and programs addressing poverty in high-needs neighbourhoods identified by Hamilton Community Foundation.** The neighbourhoods identified for potential investment to date are:
 - **Keith** (boundaries: Barton St. north to the bay, Victoria St. east to Milton St.
 - **McQuesten** (McQuesten West – Queenston Rd. north to the CN tracks, Parkdale Ave. east to Woodward Ave. to; McQuesten East – Queenston Rd. north to the CN tracks, Woodward Avenue west to , the Red Hill Valley).
 - **Wever** (Sanford Avenue area surrounding Cathy Wever school),
 - **Jamesville** (the area surrounding James St. North which is part of the Beasley neighbourhood),
 - **South Sherman Community Hub** (Wentworth St. east to Sherman Ave, escarpment north to Cannon St.)
 - **Community Access to Child Health (CATCH)** (King St. E. north to Greenhill Ave. Mount Albion Rd. east to Centennial Parkway.
2. **Approximately \$440,000 for foundational grants.** This includes \$150,000 to an open call for proposals that address needs arising from the current and emerging economic downturn, and approximately \$220,000 in proactive grants for programs that work to reduce poverty within the Foundation's priority areas of youth and the environment. The organizations who will lead this work are:
 - **Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board and the Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board:** to systemically implement anti-poverty strategies across all high-need schools in Hamilton
 - **YMCA's Youth Engagement & Action in Hamilton:** to provide community development support to engaging youth within the neighbourhood hubs in activities that alleviate, prevent and reduce poverty
 - **Environment Hamilton:** to continue and expand their community development work on poverty reduction issues within neighbourhoods
 - **Wesley Urban Ministries:** to support community development work at the neighbourhood level.
3. **\$160,000 for leadership development, evaluation, and knowledge sharing about poverty alleviation, prevention and reduction strategies, and future work in the downtown core.**

Hamilton Community Foundation

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