



For Immediate Release

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School Sisters of Notre Dame partner with the YMCA for the education of inner-city children

Hamilton, ON – The YMCA of Hamilton/Burlington has opened three new Virtual YMCA programs in Hamilton to serve the needs of children in North Hamilton, thanks to an investment from the School Sisters of Notre Dame. The new Virtual YMCAs have opened at three Catholic elementary schools: St. Brigid's, St. Lawrence and St. Mary's.

The Virtual YMCA is an after-school program for school-aged children in inner-city or low-income neighbourhoods. The program combines literacy, academic assistance, recreation and social-values elements into an integrated program that operates in the school, after school hours. Participation in the Virtual YMCA is provided at no cost to the participant or their families.

“For us, education means enabling persons to reach the fullness of their potential. For 174 years worldwide and for 89 years in the North Hamilton area we've been educating in schools and in other areas of urgent need. Although we exclude no one from our concern, we are especially sensitive to persons who are poor,” said Sister Delia Calis, Provincial Leader of the Canadian Province of the School Sisters of Notre Dame.

As a result of the generosity of the School Sisters of Notre Dame, the YMCA has doubled the number of schools and neighbourhoods they serve, to reach 120 more children whose academic lives will benefit, including many more through YMCA Community Outreach programs at the Jamesville, Beasley and Robert Land Community Centres. The Virtual YMCA helps children improve their school performance, increase their social skills, confidence, self-esteem and develops strong values, such as caring, honesty, respect and responsibility.

“We are thrilled to be partnering with the School Sisters. Their dedication to children in the inner-city fits with our own Charitable Mission of breaking down barriers so no child is denied access to a social and recreation programs at the YMCA,” said Jim Commerford, President & CEO of the YMCA of Hamilton/Burlington. “We help more children, by working with those who share our vision and commitment to building a healthy community. We are always searching for new and innovative ways to deliver programs, especially where children are concerned and in areas that need services most.”

Dr. Lee Ford-Jones, Professor of Pediatrics for the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto and supporter of the Virtual YMCA describes the program as ‘poverty is our generation's polio, and the Virtual YMCA is the vaccine.’ “I feel like we cannot rest until this program is available to every child who could use it. There are thousands,” says Dr. Ford-Jones.

The first Virtual YMCA in Canada opened at Robert Land School in Hamilton in 2001 through the generous support of a family foundation. Since then, many other donors and community members have stepped forward to provide funding for more Virtual YMCAs. To date, the YMCA of Hamilton/Burlington operates six Virtual YMCA programs in inner-city schools in Hamilton, which include: Dr. J. Edgar Davey (2003), Stinson School (2004), Cathy Wever School (2005), St. Brigid's (2006), St. Lawrence (2006), St. Mary's (2006).

- 30 -

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