

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Drumming, dance, comic arts and theatre for youth United Way and Toronto Arts Council Foundation support programs in high-poverty neighbourhoods

TORONTO, August 1, 2006 – African drumming and dance, drum-making and song, theatre arts and Japanese Manga comic art are some of the art forms on offer for children and youth in high poverty Toronto neighbourhoods this summer, thanks to a Toronto Arts Council Foundation/United Way of Greater Toronto partnership.

The Youth Community Arts Grants program targets young people in high poverty neighbourhoods, especially in the inner suburbs, who lack access to summer programs. Eight programs will provide leadership and skills development for youth and opportunities for children. Neighbourhoods include Jamestown, Jane-Finch, Malvern, Victoria Village, Keele/Eglinton, Crescent Town, Parkdale, Weston Mt. Dennis, St. Jamestown, Blake Street (Jones/Gerrard), and Kingston/Galloway.

“The arts are a key component of United Way’s strategy to offer opportunities for youth,” said Frances Lankin, President and CEO, United Way of Greater Toronto. “Research shows that the arts have positive impact for youth, especially those at risk, and helps engage them while developing skills.”

Research from the National Arts and Youth Demonstration Project indicates that the arts can help engage low-income youth at risk for conflict with the law. Through participation in arts programs, youth with multiple risks show significant improvements in emotional and behavioural development as well as artistic skills development.

“A great city is built from lively, creative, and safe neighbourhoods,” said Claire Hopkinson, Executive Director of Toronto Arts Council and TAC Foundation. “Through this pilot partnership with United Way of Greater Toronto, we are proud to expand support to excellent arts programming for youth growing up in high-needs areas of the city.”

Toronto Arts Council, along with its sister organization Toronto Arts Council Foundation, support the development, accessibility and excellence of the arts in Toronto. Through its Community Arts program, TAC helps professional artists work with community members to develop their creative imagination, artistic skills, sense of social inclusion, and identity as citizens.

United Way of Greater Toronto is committed to supporting Toronto’s youth by providing them with hope and an opportunity to build productive lives. By offering today’s at-risk youth alternatives to the guns and gangs culture, United Way’s focus is on prevention and intervention. Through partnerships, United Way is addressing the root causes of youth alienation by providing programs to engage young people, programs which promote creativity, imagination, skills training, education, athletics and social activities.

See next page for project highlights.

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Program Highlights:

Albion Neighbourhood Services will offer youth training programs in Japanese Manga comic art drawing, animation and magazine production at three sites in Jamestown. The comic art will reflect youth's experience in Rexdale and the issues they face.

Arts for Children of Toronto, established by the founder of the Avenue Arts School, provides professional arts programming and training for children from underserved communities. This year, 250 children and youth from the Jane-Finch, Malvern, Victoria Village and Keele/Eglinton neighbourhoods will take part in the program that offers drama, dance, visual arts and music training.

Children's Peace Theatre will offer youth aged 12-15 the opportunity to go to camp. Led by professional theatre artists and musicians, Crescent Town children and youth will participate in a variety of workshops to produce an original dramatic piece as well as a street parade.

Culturelink Settlement Services will offer 13 youth in the Parkdale and Weston Mt. Dennis neighbourhoods the chance to learn theatre skills and create a play and DVD based on their newcomer experiences in Canada. These youth will participate in a variety of cross-cultural workshops and will perform in local high schools.

Drum Artz Community Centre summer camp program - Samba Kidz - for children and youth aged 7-15, will provide youth in the St. Jamestown neighbourhood the opportunity to learn to play music and to write, produce and perform a play at the local community centre and street festival in July 2006.

Eastview Neighbourhood Community Centre will offer a theatre training arts program under the direction of local artists and older, peer youth teachers. Together, participants will develop and present an original production to the Blake Street and Jones/Gerrard community.

It's in Me Education and Training Programs will offer a summer-long program of African drumming and dance that will culminate in a public performance in August. These programs will help provide arts, cultural and skills development to Jamestown children and youth.

Native Child and Family Services are giving Aboriginal youth and youth of colour in the Kingston-Galloway neighbourhood the opportunity to participate in a multidisciplinary arts project. Youth will explore drumming and drum-making, drama, literature, and song. Their work will culminate in four public performances and a CD that will be produced to showcase their work.