



**United Way
of Greater Toronto**

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**United Way and TDSB Partner to Bring Community Programs
to High-need Toronto Neighbourhoods**

TORONTO – Starting July 1, residents in five high-need neighbourhoods across Toronto will gain access to new programs and services thanks to a Community Use of Space partnership between the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) and United Way of Greater Toronto.

The year-long Community Use of Space pilot project will bring much-needed programs for children, youth and other residents into neighbourhoods which lack critical community programming.

United Way and TDSB are both members of the *Strong Neighbourhoods Task Force* working to build long-term, multi-pronged solutions to create stronger neighbourhoods in Toronto. This initiative is an early step in the Task Force's plan to strengthen neighbourhoods and an example of a successful partnership approach to local issues.

"The Community Use of Space project builds on United Way's leadership on community access to affordable space in schools and on the work of the *Strong Neighbourhoods Task Force*," said United Way President Frances Lankin. "It's an immediate solution that supports a key United Way priority to strengthen neighbourhoods. We're thrilled to partner with the TDSB to open the doors to neighbourhood residents and re-engage schools as public assets. We hope this funding will be a catalyst that will allow agencies to quickly offer programs in these schools to meet immediate needs for youth, children, newcomers and other residents."

United Way is committed to providing \$250,000 for programming and evaluation and is in the process of looking for partners to assist with the funding. Children and youth programs will be a priority. United Way member agencies who play a role in the neighbourhoods identified will be invited to submit an application to United Way for a one-time grant to support the delivery of services in their local schools.

Earlier this spring the TDSB announced it would provide access to schools in Jamestown, Jane/Finch and Malvern in support of the Mayor's Community Safety Plan. In an effort to expand the pilot project, the TDSB announced it would also make space available in schools in Parkdale and Thorncliffe/Flemingdon Park.

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In 2002, United Way's Task Force on Access to Space and its report *Opening the Doors* identified the crucial lack of affordable space for community programs and offered solutions to address the issue. Key recommendations included that the province should establish a special funding envelope within the education funding formula to enable school-based community programs for children and youth, and it should support broad community use of school facilities through the creation of a Community Use Fund.

"This initiative shows the benefit of partnerships between government and the voluntary sector," says Toronto Mayor David Miller. "When we work together, we can develop creative ways to provide programs and opportunities in Toronto's neediest communities."

The Community Use of Space pilot project will be implemented by community councils made up of local residents and community agencies in each of the five neighbourhoods. TDSB funding will cover the costs for the use of facilities, while United Way will fund agencies to offer community programs.

"I am absolutely delighted that the United Way has taken such a positive and affirming step to join the Toronto District School Board in delivering essential services to those most in need in our communities. My hope is that other organizations will follow the lead of Frances Lankin and the United Way as we join with David Miller in revitalizing and rebuilding our communities," said Chair Sheila Ward, TDSB.

"This partnership is very important to us. This initiative will benefit Toronto's youth, not just from a programming stand point but also as a means of evaluating what our youth need to help them become responsible and caring adults," said Trustee Michael Coteau, Chair of the TDSB's Community Use of Schools Task Force.

The initiative will also allow United Way and TDSB to evaluate the effect of the program on the targeted neighbourhoods, and make recommendations regarding the ongoing use of schools in these and other communities.

Visit www.unitedwaytoronto.com or www.tdsb.on.ca for more information.

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