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PATHWAYS TO EDUCATION EXPANDS TO NEW COMMUNITIES IN TORONTO AND ACROSS ONTARIO

Partnership with United Way and Ontario government takes successful stay-in-school program beyond downtown Toronto's Regent Park

TORONTO, November 6, 2007 – Pathways to Education, the successful stay-in-school program responsible for dramatically reducing high school dropout rates and quadrupling post-secondary enrolment in a downtown Toronto neighborhood, is being established in four of Toronto's priority neighborhoods and across Ontario to Kitchener and Ottawa with funding support from the Ontario government and new partnership with United Way of Greater Toronto.

Funding for the expansion of Pathways comes from a \$19 million investment by the Ontario government over four years to extend the program to communities across Ontario including new programs in Ottawa, Kitchener and Toronto beginning in 2007/08. As well, an \$11 million investment in educational attainment by United Way combines one-time funding of \$10 million from the Ontario government and a \$1 million donation by a United Way donor.

In Toronto, the expansion is being implemented through a strategic partnership with United Way to continue Pathways' success in Regent Park, replicate the model in the priority neighbourhoods of Rexdale and Lawrence Heights, and establish the program in two other Toronto neighbourhoods by 2009. The partnership will leverage United Way's youth-based research and expertise and its local network of social service agencies to set-up the new Pathways locations in Toronto.

"The Pathways approach has proven to be incredibly successful in enabling youth in low income communities to graduate from high school and move on to post-secondary programs," said Carolyn Acker, Executive Director of Pathways Canada. "Expanding the program to these new communities will be a tremendous benefit to thousands of additional young people, their families and their communities."

An evaluation conducted by Boston Consulting Group in 2007 found that since the program was established in 2001, high school drop-out rates in Regent Park were reduced from 56 to 10 per cent, while the proportion of young people attending post-secondary education increased from 20 to 80 per cent, based on 300 graduates from Regent Park. More than 800 students are currently enrolled in the program in Regent Park; more than 1,200 are enrolled in five programs across Ontario.

"No matter what kind of start they have had in life, or their circumstances, Ontario's young people deserve to have every opportunity to succeed," said Premier McGuinty. "Because when all our children succeed -- when we lift one another up -- it benefits all our families and helps us all move forward, together."

Pathways to Education works at the community level by delivering academic tutoring, group and career-oriented mentoring, student and parent advocacy and support. The program also offers financial support, including transit tickets so students can travel to school, as well as bursaries for graduates who pursue post-secondary education. Pathways Canada hopes to extend the program to include 10 at-risk communities in Ontario with over 6,000 students, as well as similar communities in Canada in the coming years, beginning with Montreal (Verdun) in 2007.

"For United Way, the Pathways partnership is an opportunity to participate in one of the most successful community-based youth and educational attainment initiatives in North America," said Frances Lankin, President and CEO of United Way of Greater Toronto. "The partnership will also provide both organizations with the opportunity to increase the impact on these communities and to continue to learn from existing activities to support youth across Toronto."

United Way's strategic partnership with Pathways will be complemented by its continued support of the Ontario government's Open Schools initiative by providing summer programming throughout Toronto's priority neighbourhoods, and by developing a Community of Practice initiative to identify and share best practices in educational attainment.

About Pathways to Education

Pathways to Education Canada is a charitable foundation created to reduce poverty and its effects by lowering the dropout rate and increasing access to post-secondary education among disadvantaged youth in Canada. Pathways was developed by the Regent Park Community Health Centre which launched the initial program in Regent Park in Toronto in 2001 and is now expanding with local partners delivering the program in five additional locations in Canada.

About United Way of Greater Toronto

Established in 1956, United Way of Greater Toronto is a registered charity and community impact organization dedicated to improving lives and strengthening neighbourhoods across Toronto. United Way identifies needs and takes action to create a better, safer, stronger city through research, partnerships and support of a network of 200 health and social service agencies.

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