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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

\$1-Million Gift Supports Children in Hamilton's Poorest Neighbourhood

HAMILTON - A local couple has made a \$1-million gift to Hamilton Community Foundation that is being directed to children in Hamilton's poorest neighbourhood.

The retired educators, who prefer to remain anonymous, are providing funding for programs geared to early learning and development at a north-end community centre. "We believe the benefits of early child development are numerous – for the children, their families and the community," one of them says. "We support the goal of the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction to make Hamilton the best place to raise a child."

The early learning and childhood development programs will take place at the Beasley Community Centre, a small Elgin Street facility owned by the City of Hamilton. With the leadership of Wesley Urban Ministries, the centre will deliver a range of early years services starting with a parent-child drop-in centre. It will also be the access and referral point for other resources in the community including child care, early literacy programs, nutrition and health care. Beasley residents will be actively involved in determining what services are needed.

"These donors are people who feel deeply about giving children the best possible start in life, and they chose to share their good fortune to do just that," says Carolyn Milne, President and CEO of Hamilton Community Foundation (HCF). "It's a unique gift because it's aimed at programs in a specific neighbourhood. There's no question it's going to make a difference in people's lives."

"Beasley is a neighbourhood with a real desire, among many of its residents, to improve things," says Paul Johnson, Executive Director of Wesley Urban Ministries.

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“This kind of early childhood programming is critical to help break the cycle of poverty and give our city’s children a more equal playing field. Wesley Urban Ministries will be working with Beasley residents to determine what programs and services will be most helpful.”

The \$1-million gift had its origins in a Hamilton Spectator article in May 2006. The donors were dismayed to read that over 1,400 planned child care spaces would disappear as a result of the federal government’s cancellation of the planned National Child Care Program.

“We read it and thought it was a terrible shame,” says one of the donors. “Both of us were aware of research by Dr. Fraser Mustard showing long-term benefits for children when they are exposed to quality early learning. And we’ve seen it personally with our grandchildren.”

The couple was referred to Hamilton Community Foundation to help them examine the best strategy for their investment. After several months of intensive research by HCF, the couple was presented with several options and decided to support programs aimed at pre-school children in Beasley neighbourhood.

The donation was in marketable securities. The same federal budget that sparked their impulse to give ironically also presented a new and beneficial way to make the donation: stocks and bonds can now be donated to charitable organizations without paying capital gains tax.

“The \$1 million in funding is expected to support programming and outreach within the Beasley community for approximately three years,” Carolyn Milne says. “This is a wonderful start and we are confident that long-term funding to sustain the programs will be identified.”

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For more information, please contact Carolyn Milne, HCF President & CEO,
or Sheree Meredith, HCF Vice-President, Grants & Community Partnerships, at 905-523-5600.

www.hcf.on.ca

For more information about the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction, and Making Hamilton the Best Place to Raise a Child, please go to www.hamiltonpoverty.ca.

Backgrounders on Beasley Neighbourhood and the Beasley Community Centre attached.