

November 7, 2007

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Environmental Conference Calls Hamilton Teenagers to Action**  
Event Scheduled for Nov 8, Mohawk College "I" Wing - 9:00 – 3:00

HAMILTON - "Younger generations need to become better educated about their impact on the environment if they are to understand what they can do to protect the planet." That is the message from Quinn Runkle, a 16-year-old B.C. student, who will address students from Hamilton's 27 high schools tomorrow morning. "As a high school student in B.C. I am able to learn new things about my world every day. But, sustainability, climate change, and renewable resources are not part of my education."

Ms. Runkle will be the keynote speaker at Hamilton Community Foundation's third annual *Living the Environment* conference, hosted by its Youth Advisory Council (YAC) in partnership with Mohawk College and McMaster University's Ontario Public Interest Research Group. At a young age, Ms. Runkle already boasts an impressive environmental record. She has participated in the United Nations Children's Conference on the Environment and traveled to the Antarctic on an expedition to learn about climate change. She calls her Antarctic experience a wake-up call that spurred her to share her passion about the environment and the difference an individual can make.

"Once younger generations are educated about what is happening in our world they will be able to understand the actions our planet needs," says Ms. Runkle. "These attitudes and actions will carry with them into their households, and eventually into the work world. It is much easier to work up through a generation than trying to work down through big corporations "

Living the Environment enables some 100 high school students and their teachers from across Hamilton to learn more about environmental issues through hands-on workshops. The conference also launches HCF's annual Protecting Our Environment Together ("POET") youth grants which enable students to plan and carry out their own projects to improve the environment over the school year. Grants of up to \$700 each are available to area high-schools for youth-led initiatives.

As a result of last year's POET youth grants, students across Hamilton turned their ideas into environmental action through 23 student projects. These ranged from a garden showcasing indigenous species at Cathedral High School, to a vermiculture initiative at Parkside High showing how recycling food waste can become a viable alternative to purchased compost, to a landfill diversion program at Hamilton District Christian High which also helped to support the school's projects in the third world.

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“Virtually every school in Hamilton is participating this year, which is absolutely amazing” says YAC adult advisor Linda Hughes. “It’s proof of the growing concern about the environment among our youth, and their interest in playing an active role in protecting it. Through the workshops and speakers these kids are inspired with ideas for helping the planet, and the grant opportunities can provide the means to implement them.”

*Living the Environment* workshops carry the theme of “Ideas into Action”, including presentations from local environmental experts on how to audit your trash, transform your school grounds into learning grounds, start your own environmental club and act on alternatives to idling.

A lunchtime fashion show features “Revolution Wear” by Sapphire Singh, a local artist whose interest in waste reduction has led her to reuse, reinvent and recreate second hand clothing and salvaged objects into functional wearable art.

Hamilton Community Foundation receives funds from generous citizens, invests those funds to generate income, and makes grants to support a wide range of local charities, including arts and heritage, education, the environment, health and social services. It brings people together to convene solutions to some of Hamilton’s most pressing challenges, such as environmental protection, neighbourhood revitalization and poverty.

HCF’s Youth Advisory Council (YAC) provides young people age 13 to 21 with an opportunity to work together with HCF as they raise funds and make grants in our community to benefit other youth. YAC members learn about Hamilton’s strengths and needs, get involved in the community, gain leadership and provide a youth perspective to HCF’s work.

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Backgrounder Attached

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