



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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**YOUTH LAUNCH NEW SPACE IN WESTON-MT. DENNIS COMMUNITY**  
*Partnership provides access to safe space in priority neighbourhood*

TORONTO – Today, youth leaders of For Youth Initiative (FYI) were joined by their partners from the Youth Challenge Fund (YCF), United Way Toronto, City of Toronto, Mayor David Miller and generous donors Judith and Henrietta Kostman (on behalf of George and Rachel Kostman) to celebrate the official opening of a new youth-designated community space at 1652 Keele St. in Weston-Mt. Dennis.

The space, which includes a computer room, lounge, dance space, kitchen, boardroom and offices, was planned, designed and built by and for young people in the community. In addition to leading the development phase with their partners at the City and YCF, youth played an integral role as part of the construction team.

Pamela Grant, Executive Director of YCF, says she's inspired by the youth leadership at FYI.

"Today's celebration is the end result of what has been a unique youth-led development process, four years in the making. The youth of Weston-Mt. Dennis now have a space that's truly theirs. They've shown tremendous leadership, passion and perseverance, playing a crucial role in shifting the way institutions across the city interact with young people."

The priority neighbourhood of Weston-Mt. Dennis has faced a number of challenges, including violence and gang activity amongst young people. In 2006, youth leaders at FYI identified the need for greater access to safe space in their community. They received a Building Great Ideas grant of \$50,000 from YCF to conduct a feasibility study for the initiative. Upon successful completion, FYI received an additional \$1.38 million Legacy grant from YCF to support construction of the space as well as development of an organizational mentorship program to build the capacity of grassroots, youth-led organizations.

Grant, Miller and the Kostmans toured the new space, guided by members of FYI who led the planning and design of the space from day one.

The initiative at 1652 Keele is the first of three youth spaces to be supported by the generosity of the Kostman family. For decades, George and Rachel Kostman quietly practiced their philanthropy to ensure young people in priority neighbourhoods had access to space they could call their own.

The Youth Challenge Fund is a unique partnership between the Government of Ontario and United Way Toronto. FYI is a United Way member agency and a YCF-funded initiative.

A total of \$1.71 million has been invested to support FYI through on-going capacity building and leadership development to enable the construction of the space, as well as the development and implementation of an organizational mentorship program. YCF contributed \$1.43 million, of which \$526,000 was designated to FYI through a generous bequest made by the Kostman family. George and Rachel Kostman have provided a total of \$2.6 million that will be used to fund three youth spaces. In 2008, the City of Toronto contributed \$280,000 for the construction of the FYI space through the Partnership Opportunities Legacy (POL) Fund, which gives priority to youth-focused initiatives at the neighbourhood level.

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