

MEDIA RELEASE

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United Way
of York Region

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United Way invests \$150,000 in community groups and solutions

Strength Investments applauded as game-changing by leaders and groups

Richmond Hill, ON: United Way of York Region's (UWYR) \$150,000 Strength Investments funding is a real game-changer, according to community groups and leaders like Garland Yates, a renowned North American expert on civic involvement.

"Strength Investments is simple and transformational," said Yates, a former Senior Fellow at the Annie E. Casey Foundation, in Richmond Hill on Wednesday, March 30th at United Way's *Meeting House*. "Its power lies in funding everyday people and groups, already at work in their communities, to identify and solve their own priorities. Civic participation is the single most sustainable way to solve our pressing social issues."

Launched in October 2010, United Way's Strength Investments funds projects that: bring residents, community, business, faith groups and agencies together; work on simple and collaborative responses to complex social issues; clearly demonstrate the impact of the project on community priorities.

Helen Murray, Vice Chair of UWYR's Board of Directors and Chair, Community Investment Committee, says, "Little did we know that this innovative, seed fund of \$150,000 would yield 31 applications totaling over \$1.3M in requests - a full 10 times the funding supply."

"A huge thank you to the volunteers that reviewed all 31 applications on key criteria and indicators, and, with difficulty," added Murray, "selected six inaugural recipients for the 2010/2011 Strength Investments funding."

The six inaugural recipients were announced to a crowd of over 50 guests on Wednesday, March 30th, as part of United Way's *Meeting House*, the first in a series of community dialogues featuring keynote speakers and discussion on our region's most pressing social issues.

List of Selected Projects and Description Attached

"There are no other funding supports available for informal groups like ours," states Donna Massel, a parent from one of the Strength Investments recipients, Together for Families Mental Health. "This funding from United Way invests in the strength and resilience of families across

the region who are coping every single day with their child's mental illness. It will allow our informal support network to care for each other, reach out to 100 more families, share information and advocate for much needed services close to home."

"Strength Investments is United Way at its best," offers Daniele Zanotti, CEO, United Way of York Region, "uniting people and resources to improve our communities – and then getting the heck out of the way and watching it succeed and change lives. I am looking forward to the outcomes of these inaugural projects and ecstatic about our 2011/2012 funding announcements – expected in the upcoming months."

Established in 1976, United Way of York Region identifies community priorities and works with partners to take action, supporting a network of 100 critical programs across the region's nine municipalities.

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Recipients of Inaugural Strength Investments, 2010-2011

Project Name	Project Lead	Description	Funding Allocation
Together for Families Mental Health	The York Region Chapter for Children's Mental Health	Strength Investments will help expand this existing network of parents with children who have mental illness as they provide peer support, education and advocacy to access much needed services.	\$11,775
Community Development in Action	Canadian Mental Health Association, York Region Branch	Hosted by CMHA York Region, this funding supports the volunteer Board of Directors and residents in the Charles Darrow Co-op in Aurora as they identify and work on solutions to their priorities – helping youth, accessing jobs, to name a few.	\$53,202
"Enabling Economic Independence" A community approach to reintegration in York Region	John Howard Society	This collaborative will bring together police, service providers, and, most importantly, York Region residents who are facing barriers to accessing jobs and housing due to involvement in the criminal justice system. Strength Investments will fund solutions that support integration and economic independence.	\$18,000
Latinas en York Region	Latin Women for a Better Future	An informal group of Spanish speaking women from across our municipalities supporting each other as they adjust to life, jobs, education and child development in their new home – York Region. Strength Investments will help them reach out to more newcomer women and expand their strong support network.	\$8,369
South Asian Family Empowerment (SAFE) project	South Asian Autism Awareness Centre	A group of South Asian families who have children with ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder), helping each other adjust to their child's development, mentoring new parents, providing information on programs and supports, and advocating for increased services.	\$12,850
Building Sustainable Capacities amongst Afro-Canadian Caribbean Youth in York Region	Markham African Caribbean Association	This initiative involves and listens to local youth as they identify their realities in York Region – inclusion, education, family life – and then helps them identify and build their own solutions.	\$20,804