

Cuts to City-run after-school programs create unprecedented demand for Moorelands Community Services' After-school programs in Flemingdon and Thorncliffe Parks

Moorelands' programs fill up in record time

Tuesday September 27, 2011 (Toronto, ON) -- Cuts to Toronto Parks and Recreation's after-school programs are creating unprecedented demand for Moorelands Community Services' After-school programs in Thorncliffe Park and Flemingdon Park. With residents of these high-needs and low-income neighbourhoods lining up an hour and a half before registration, Moorelands After-school programs filled up in 20 minutes, faster than ever before. A number of families who depend on Moorelands' After-school programming were turned away.

"Demand for our programs this year is unprecedented. While they're well-respected and popular within the communities they serve, to have all programs filled within 20 minutes is unheard of," said Patricia Jacobs, Executive Director, Moorelands Community Services. "With the City cancelling its after-school programming, there are fewer good yet affordable options for low-income families. Sadly, we had to turn families away and that's very difficult when you know how important these programs are to their survival."

For families living in poverty, after-school programs are often critical to providing parents with the support necessary to work, look for work or attend classes to equip them to work. Without this type of community programming, some parents are forced to forfeit jobs to be at home with their children after school. "Some parents were in tears and others were clearly distressed. They want to work – they want to provide for their families but they don't know how to without a safe after-school option," said Jacobs.

After-school programs are not only crucial to ensuring children's safety - the four most dangerous hours of the day for children ages six to 13 are from 3:00 p.m. -7:00 p.m. – but they're directly linked to various positive child development outcomes including improved school engagement and performance; higher self-esteem; lower rates of depression; and decreases in anti-social and risk behaviours. "Studies show children who feel connected to their community are less likely to engage in delinquent behaviour; there's a reduction in teen pregnancy, crime and truancy. And, as a result, the community benefits. After-school programs are a key tool for developing that type of connection," said Jacobs. "I wish we had more capacity but for us increasing capacity means increasing funding."

Supported largely by foundation and individual donations, Moorelands' After-school programs are low cost and provide organized and structured activities, enrichment and character education for children ages six-12 throughout the school year. From science projects to team building games to cooking classes, the programs are designed to foster life skill development in a fun atmosphere. "One of the reasons they're so popular is both kids and parents love them; parents love the way the program strengthens children's character, confidence and competence and the kids simply love the fun," said Jacobs.

Founded in 1912, Moorelands is a Toronto-based non-profit working with low-income urban children. Focused on bridging the opportunity gap, Moorelands programs are aimed at helping children develop

confidence, competence and character. Its programs include After-school programs, a Wilderness Camp, Summer Day Camps, Youth Leadership programs, Baby Bundles and Christmas Sharing.

- 30 -

For more information:

Patricia Jacobs

Executive Director, Moorelands Community Services

pjacobs@moorelands.ca

416 466 9987 ext 308

www.moorelands.ca

Alison Cook

alison.cook@sympatico.ca

647 400 6743