



January 25, 2010

Janis Rukavina, Chair
The Funding Network-Toronto
65 Queen Street West, Suite 2400,
Toronto, Ontario, M5H 2M8

Dear Janis:

It is with great pleasure that I send this report on the funding that Trails Youth Initiatives (Trails) received from The Funding Network-Toronto.

Trails takes kids from the inner city of Toronto (referred by Principals from 5 Toronto District School Board feeder schools in the identified United Way 13 Priority Neighborhoods). At Trails we create an environment in which kids can succeed. Every year approximately 20 kids (10 boys and 10 girls) age 12, come to Trails for the first of their four or five years in the programme to participate at our residential Lakeside setting in a variety of adventure-based activities with a structured programme. We work with these kids in a progressive model of education using a 'learning by doing' approach that fosters children from the inner-city to realize their true potential in a supportive and safe environment. By the time they leave Trails four or five years later, they will have the skills, knowledge and confidence to become contributing members of their and our communities.

As a result of The Funding Network-Toronto's financial support Trail's was able to provide much needed updated equipment for our large outdoor experiential component for adventure-based activities such as canoeing, camping and hiking. Ten new sleeping bags and tents were purchased so that our kids could camp year round during day trip expeditions and 10 day expeditions. Many of the expeditions the kids go on are one and two week trips, so new backpacks and tents were paramount to enduring the trips as well as to withstand the elements. Four new canoes, 20 paddles and 10 lifejackets allowed us to have more outdoor expeditions to Temagami and to Limberlost (our northern camp near Algonquin) as well as teaching canoeing skills right on our own lake at our Lakeside facility.

Each year we build onto our programme components and the area of Outdoor Skills is a means of using the outdoors to develop confidence and transfer learning while simultaneously learning outdoor skills. Part of these skills involves winter camping, canoeing, hiking and tripping skills including trip planning

and preparation. So our Year One's learn the basics -to build a fire, put up a tent, how to carry a backpack and by Year Four this grows to tripping and navigation skills through canoe expeditions. With the new equipment our Year Three and Year Four youth (20 kids total) did 10 day canoe trips to the French River and to Temagami (see picture where the kids are shown with backpacks and setting up tents) and extended solo and overnight solo trips. Our youth did this with the equipment your funding provided and most importantly by doing so, this was done with safety being paramount.

So by using adventure and challenge in all our programmes this impels the youth to take healthy risks that builds self-confidence within a safe environment. By using reflective exercises after each outing, our youth are encouraged to transfer their learning's back into their daily lives and conceptualize the application of the learning on their own. With each year our youth get better at critical thinking so they can think for themselves, to question and come up with their own understand of all they have learned at Trails to apply to their everyday lives.

Overall what may have been support from The Funding Network-Toronto for equipment for Trails Programme, really was a means of engaging our youth in fun with a purpose in an emotional and physically safe environment to help them develop their **Roots and Wings**. Trails offers permanence to youth who may experience little, if any, constants in their live. Our youth talk about Trails as being part of their family – their *roots*. Our youth now have the skills, knowledge and confidence to make good life decisions and achieve their goals beyond the confines of Trails – developing their *wings*.

So, our staff, volunteers, Board of Directors and most importantly our youth, THANK YOU for allowing our grassroots organization to continue to do what we do best to make a big impact on a few kids, rather than a small impact on a lot of kids so we can challenge and equip vulnerable youth to become contributing members of their and our communities.

You will be happy to note as well, that Tahirah Stanley who represented us as a Trails graduate is now in her third year at York University doing a double major in Theatre and International Development Studies. She has since travelled to India and in addition won the YMCA Youth Peace Medallion for the work that she has done in her own community and abroad. As she says, "with the constant support of Trails Youth Initiatives, I am not only living my dream but working to better the lives of others."

Tahirah is just one youth in the many that Trails has helped but we could not have done it without the support from donors that make up The Funding Network-Toronto. We have enclosed some pictures to show 'your equipment' support in action.

We Thank YOU!

Sincerely,

Shirley Clark
Director of Development
Trails Youth Initiatives
www.trails.ca
Pictures attached

Trails Youth Initiatives

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