

## United Way of Winnipeg Launches New Youth Website at 2005 Annual Student Leadership Conference Today

United Way of Winnipeg's (UWW) 2005 Student Leadership Conference (SLC) for Winnipeg high school students takes place today at Canad Inns, Polo Park. As sponsored by the Great-West Life Assurance Company, this year's event heralds the official launch of a new United Way website geared to Winnipeg youth.

"The young people of Winnipeg are the heart and soul of United Way's 'We' philosophy," says Eric Friesen, Manager of United Way's Youth Programs. "They really care about the place we all call 'home'. That's why our conference is both a catalyst and a magnet for students from all over the city."

"This conference is an opportunity for youth to learn how to put their leadership skills into action and to get to know United Way," says an enthusiastic Emma Fineblit, a member of United Way of Winnipeg's Youth Relations Council and a host of today's event. "With all of United Way's youth programs and the new youth website, it is easier than ever for young people to get involved with United Way, be leaders, and make a difference in their community."

"Get Something Started" does double-duty as the underlying theme for both this year's conference as well as United Way's new website [www.unitedwayyouth.mb.ca](http://www.unitedwayyouth.mb.ca). Its purpose is to connect Winnipeg youth with United Way and show them how they can be involved building a better community. As a result, they can create volunteer-based projects to meet a specific need in their school or neighbourhood. These projects may address many issues from education, literacy, safety and poverty reduction to the environment, cultural understanding and community relationships.

At 9 a.m. today, [www.unitedwayyouth.mb.ca](http://www.unitedwayyouth.mb.ca) officially goes on-line. Web visitors can access information about United Way's Youth Relations Council, Shaw United Way's Youth Connections program, as well as project grant application information and forms. In the process, students involved will learn new skills and develop their individual talents which will help them prepare for their futures as adults. Like the SLC itself, the new website builds on United Way of Winnipeg's ongoing goal of engaging individuals and mobilizing collective action to create a better city for everyone who lives here.

United Way-funded student volunteer projects include the Brooklands Literacy Program where high school students returned to their local elementary school to cook breakfast and read to younger students leaving each child with a book of their own and the Victor Mager Multicultural Festival which celebrated the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination by Winnipeg Boys & Girls Clubs.

This year's conference agenda includes teen volunteerism, building leadership skills and successful school fundraising. Presentations and workshops will showcase speakers from UWW-funded agencies including the Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre, the Boys & Girls Clubs of Winnipeg, the Spence Neighbourhood Association and the Elmwood Community Resource Centre and Area Association.



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United Way's Student Leadership Conference began in 1998. Since then, attendance at the SLC has grown from 50 to over 200 participants. Volunteer council positions have increased from the original 12 members to today's 50. Together with United Way and agency staff, they plan, organize and implement United Way's youth engagement strategies.

Great-West Life has sponsored United Way's Student Leadership Conference in Winnipeg since 2002 and has been the major sponsor of United Way's Student Community Service Award program since 2001. The award is given to one Grade 11 student in approximately 50 Winnipeg high schools every year. Recipients are chosen by their schools based on their commitment to volunteering in the school and the community. A generous and long-standing supporter, Great-West has contributed over \$1 million in annual corporate and workplace donations to United Way campaigns in Canada.

Founded in Winnipeg in 1891, Great-West is a leading Canadian life and health insurer whose financial security advisors work with clients from coast to coast to help them secure their financial futures. Through their national program for corporate citizenship, *The Key to Giving*, Great-West contributes directly to hundreds of non-profit and charitable organizations across the country.

United Way of Winnipeg is an independent, nonpolitical organization that works with Winnipeggers to build upon the strength of volunteers and voluntary action by engaging the whole community for the benefit of the whole community. Its mission: to improve lives and build community by engaging individuals and mobilizing collective action.

By investing in strategies to make Winnipeg a stronger, more vibrant city for everyone, United Way enables a stable network of services that will be there tomorrow. These strategies encourage successful children and youth; empower people who live in poverty, with disabilities, or who are left out because of age, culture, race or status; and building vibrant neighbourhoods where people can feel safe, welcome and part of their community.

United Way is the only volunteer-driven, community organization that provides core, as well as one-time funding to kick-start innovative solutions to community challenges. Winnipeggers have invested over \$270 million through United Way of Winnipeg since its inception in 1965.

