

community action grant



March 19, 2018

MLSE FOUNDATION AWARDS TORONTO RAPTORS COMMUNITY ACTION GRANT PRESENTED BY JUST ENERGY FOUNDATION TO HORIZONS FOR YOUTH

MLSE Foundation announced Horizons for Youth as this year's recipient of the *Toronto Raptors Community Action Grant* presented by *Just Energy Foundation* during Friday's Toronto Raptors versus Dallas Mavericks game at Air Canada Centre. Erika Minkhorst, MLSE Foundation's Director of Philanthropy & Operations, was joined by Sandy Aniceto, Just Energy Foundation's Communications Specialist, Filomena Williams and Stacey Murie, Horizons for Youth's Executive Director and Development Associate, for the announcement and cheque presentation. The \$50,000 grant will support the *Project Rebound Program*, which will provide basketball programming to the homeless and at-risk youth supported by Horizons for Youth.

"Horizon for Youth's *Project Rebound* program embodies MLSE Foundation's vision of changing lives through the spirit and power of sports," said Tanya Mruck, Executive Director of MLSE Foundation. "We are proud to support programs like *Project Rebound* which focus on youth who have faced barriers to participating in organized sport their entire lives. Horizons for Youth's commitment to delivering programming to homeless and at-risk youth provides these youth with an opportunity to learn, grow and create friendships through sport; truly changing their lives for the better."

Horizons for Youth is located in a high-priority neighbourhood in Toronto near Eglinton Avenue and Caledonia Road. Homeless youth in the area are vulnerable to experiencing social isolation, self-esteem issues and nutritional deprivation. *Project Rebound's* fun atmosphere will help foster supportive friendships among participants and ensure all youth are included, regardless of their personal history. The program will help raise self-esteem levels by highlighting each individual's importance in basketball through communication, cooperation and teamwork. The program will provide a needed health intervention for homeless youth to combat nutritional deprivation. It will also include bi-monthly Health Promotion workshops encouraging participants to lead healthy and active lifestyles.

"We are delighted to receive this generous grant from MLSE Foundation," said Filomena Williams, Executive Director of Horizons for Youth. The grant provides at-risk youth with an opportunity to develop inner strength, courage, determination and ultimately, a sense of empowerment, hope and belief in themselves and each other. At-risk youth residing in the shelter and former residents in the community have been traumatized by a variety of factors. As "late stage" adolescents, they face significant pressure with other friends or acquaintances who are on their way in terms of further schooling, apprenticeships or job opportunities. Many are disconnected, and deep down frightened. This grant will give some of our youth the opportunity to be part of an organized group, which will teach them not only athletic skills, but most important, to be part of a team and develop intimate bonds with other youth and mentors."

Horizons for Youth has a long history of sheltering, preparing and guiding homeless and at-risk youth to be contributing community members. Established in 1994, Horizons for Youth offers five core programs designed to help youth permanently escape the cycles of homelessness and poverty. These include: Individualized Case Management, Mental Health Support, Day Program, Housing Program and Community Support & Aftercare. *Project Rebound* will be included in the Day Program. Majority of Horizons for Youth clients have lived in poverty and faced multiple barriers to participating in organized sport. *Project Rebound* will be accessible to all clients supported by Horizons for Youth. There will be no registration fees for programming and all participants will be provided with appropriate athletic clothing and shoes. Programming will run once a week and will look to support 450 unique youth over three years.

“We were incredibly moved by the work of Horizons for Youth to provide safety and vital programs for homeless and vulnerable youth,” said Kandi Terry, Executive Director of the Just Energy Foundation. “Faced with such tremendous issues so early in life, many of whom have never had the chance to participate in organized sports, we are so pleased to support *Project Rebound* to give these young people a safe and accessible environment to pursue healthy activities, experience belonging and learn important life skills.”

The *Toronto Maple Leafs, Toronto Raptors and Toronto FC Community Action Grants* are three \$50,000 sport-specific prizes presented by Just Energy Foundation that MLSE Foundation award to charitable organizations supporting youth sports programming in Toronto. Each year, eligible organizations can apply for all grants at mlsefoundation.org, where submissions are reviewed by a selection committee before a winner is chosen and announced at a special event in their community.

About Horizons for Youth

Horizons for Youth provides shelter and supportive programming to homeless and at-risk youth between the ages of 16-24 in Toronto. Our programs and services are proven to help youth achieve subsidized housing, employment, advancements in their education, improved mental health and reconciliation with their caregivers. Since opening our doors in 1994, we have helped thousands of youth leave the streets behind. For more information, please visit horizonsforyouth.org or follow us on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).

About MLSE Foundation

MLSE Foundation believes all kids should have access to sport and the opportunity to develop lasting dreams on the playing field. With the support of MLSE's teams, MLSE Foundation funds the refurbishment of local athletic facilities and programs that support kids through sports and recreation. Since launching in 2010, MLSE Foundation has invested more than \$30 million into our community. For more information visit mlsefoundation.org and follow MLSE Foundation on [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#).

About Just Energy Foundation

Just Energy Foundation was established in 2013 by Just Energy Group Inc. to help registered Canadian and U.S. charitable organizations secure the resources required to promote the health and well-being of communities in need. Funded entirely by Just Energy, the Foundation invests in local programs that work to enhance the quality of life in Just Energy's operating markets towards building stronger and supportive communities. Visit justenergyfoundation.com to learn more.

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