

For Immediate Release

Ontario Youth Friendly Communities Recognized at Blue Mountain Resort

Toronto, March 23, 2015 – On March 25, 2015, Ontario’s newest **Youth Friendly Communities** will be honoured at a ceremony held at the Parks and Recreation Ontario Educational Forum at Blue Mountain Resort near Collingwood, Ontario. This year’s recipients, the **Cities of Guelph** and **Sault Ste. Marie**, the **Towns of Gananoque** and **Oakville**, the **Municipality of South Huron**, have all been recognized for their outstanding commitment to providing youth with opportunities to play, and to participate in and contribute to their communities. Parliamentary Assistant Sophie Kiwala, MPP for Kingston and the Islands, is scheduled to attend to honour these communities. Mayors, councillors, youth and community partners from the Youth Friendly Communities will take part in this celebration of youth.

Play Works, an independent group of organizations committed to encouraging and promoting a greater investment in youth play, established the Youth Friendly Community Recognition Program in 2005. It acknowledges the great work that is being done in communities across Ontario to ensure that youth (ages 13-19) have continuous access to opportunities for play ranging from arts to recreation to civic leadership. The rigorous selection process requires communities to meet at least ten of sixteen youth-friendly criteria. Since 2005, 41 Ontario communities have been recognized as Youth Friendly, ranging from small rural locations like the Wikwemikong Unceded Indian Reserve No. 26 to urban centres like the City of Thunder Bay. A complete list of communities can be found at: playworkspartnership.ca/youth-friendly-communities.

Youth Friendly Communities can work towards different levels of recognition - Bronze, Silver, Gold and Platinum - depending on the number of criteria they meet. Many communities have applied in successive years in order to achieve “Platinum Status.”

Providing opportunities for youth to play is essential to the Youth Friendly Community principles. “Play isn’t just playing,” states Hallie Atter, the Play Works Chair, “it’s an essential and necessary aspect of development for youth. When communities make youth play a priority, they help youth reach their full potential. Youth Friendly Communities help to build a skilled and employable workforce, a creative cultural community, and healthier individuals. Many communities large and small, urban and rural, are well on their way to being a youth friendly community.” And she adds, “The time for putting Ontario’s youth first is now.”

Event Details: Youth Friendly Community Recognition Ceremony

Date: March 25, 2014

Time: 6 pm to 7:15 pm

Location: Huron Grand Ballroom, Blue Mountain Conference Centre, 108 Jozo Weider Blvd., Town of the Blue Mountains

Background

Play Works is a group of organizations that are concerned about the future of our youth and have joined forces to bring back the power of play to Ontario’s young people. Play Works believes that there are communities across Ontario taking steps to open their doors to youth by reinvesting in youth play. To learn more about Play Works, the Youth Friendly Community Recognition Program, *The Cost of Excluding Ontario’s Youth from Play* report, and the ‘Do It Yourself’ program, a one-time initiative to help fund youth organized activities, please visit: www.playworkspartnership.ca.

The Play Works Partners are: 4-H Ontario, Arts Network for Children and Youth, Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada – Central Region, Laidlaw Foundation, Ophea, Sport Alliance Ontario, Parks and Recreation Ontario, YMCA Ontario

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