

United Way and the Ismaili Community Partner to Help Youth Succeed

May 10, 2010 – Calgary, Alberta – Currently 30 per cent of Alberta students don't graduate within three years of starting Grade 10. The Ismaili Community believes this number is too high and has embarked on a new partnership with United Way of Calgary and Area to help increase high school graduation in the province.

The Ismaili Community and United Way have set up the *Achievement through High School Fund* to encourage youth who have no family support to stay in school, and to help youth who have left high school to go back to complete their education.

“United Way believes all children and youth should have every opportunity available to them,” says Ruth Ramsden-Wood, President of United Way of Calgary and Area. “This partnership is a step in the right direction. The Ismaili Community recognizes how important it is to see our youth succeed, and we will work with them to find new ways of achieving success,” she says.

The group is working to raise \$75,000 that will be put toward a school youth bursary fund that will help pay for living expenses while youth attend school. It will also support the construction of an on-line back to school guide for youth who wish to return to school, but are not sure how to do it.

“The Ismaili Community see the youth of Calgary as the key to its success. By working with United Way, we know our investment is going to make a difference; we know more youth are going to have new opportunities to succeed, and we are pleased to be a part of it,” says Dr. Habib Kurwa, Chair of the Partnership Committee. “We are using our annual Stampede events to garner support for this fund. Our float and our breakfast are dedicated to raising awareness about the opportunities that High School completion brings.”

The project augments United Way’s current initiatives, which prepare youth for school, support family relationships, increase educational opportunities, and connect youth with career opportunities.

There are many different stories behind why a youth drops out of high school, but statistics show that those students often have low self esteem and are more prone to getting involved in risky behaviour. For many, English is their second language, and they have peers that are challenged in the same areas.

“For youth to succeed as adults they must have a successful transition into adulthood,” says Ruth Ramsden-Wood.

For more information on this project, log onto www.calgaryunitedway.org

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