



DAREARTS WINTER PROGRAM BEGINS TO EMPOWER KIDS AGAINST BULLYING AND GANGS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: December 9, 2014

The **DAREarts winter program** officially begins this week, **December 8 - 12, 2014**, to help empower children from the **Rexdale and surrounding area** of Toronto to ignite positive change in their lives.

The DAREarts winter program began in 2008 at the behest of then Toronto District School Board (TDSB) Trustee for Northwest Etobicoke, John Hastings, who admired the spring program's success in the downtown Toronto and Scarborough area. The program is now directly combating the severe issues of gang violence, bullying and poverty facing the Rexdale area. It creates leaders from children who are at risk of not reaching their full potential.

Over **150 students** from **15 schools from Northwest Etobicoke** are attending the winter program as delegates from their school. They are then charged with the job of going back to their schools after each DAREarts Day and peer teaching their classmates what they have learned. Participating schools include Albion Heights J.M.S., Beaumonde Heights J.M.S., Broadacres J.S., Calico P.S., Claireville J.S., Elmbank J.M.S., Greenholme J.M.S., Gulfstream P.S., Hollycrest M.S., Melody Village J.S., Rivercrest J.S., Smithfield M.S., The Elms J.M.S., West Humber J.M.S. and Westmount J.S.

Schools selected up to two students from each grade who are most in need of the DAREarts opportunity to see a wider world and become leaders but are challenged for various reasons such as economic, academic and social difficulties. This is the first year in the program's history that it will serve children in every grade from grades 4-8, just like its spring counterpart.

DAREarts lead teacher, **Laura MacKinnon**, will be taking the children to a number of arts related venues across Toronto including the **AGO, Ballet Jorgen** and the **Canadian Opera Company** to expand their artistic horizons. Ms. Mackinnon will be joined by a number of accomplished Canadian artists including; Emmy-winning producer of 60 Minutes, **Monika Jensen-Stevenson**; Juno-nominated songwriter, **Glenn Marais**; Dora-winning actor, **Jamie Robinson**; the co-artistic director of Opera Atelier, **Jeannette Lajeunesse Zingg**; and the first conductor of the Toronto Symphony, **Victor Feldbrill**. These visits are just the beginning of their experience. With the DARE values of Discipline, Action, Responsibility and Excellence, they take up the challenge to become leaders who peer-teach their respective classes, bringing the power of the arts to several thousand more children.

The winter program will conclude on March 5, 2015, with a public showcase of the children's newfound abilities at **North Albion Colligate Institute**. All are welcome.

Backgrounder:

Canada's **DAREarts** (Canadian Charitable No. 88691 7764 RR0002) is a national charity that uses the arts to empower thousands of at-risk kids with the ability to ignite positive change in themselves and others. Teaching "**Discipline, Action, Responsibility and Excellence**," DAREarts' five-year program works with 9-15 year-olds from schools in marginalized

neighborhoods. For more information, visit www.darearts.com and www.darearts.wordpress.com.

DAREarts thanks its lead supporters: **Northbridge Insurance, Guy Carpenter, Scotiabank, Ontario Arts Council** and **Ontario Trillium Foundation**.

The Toronto District School Board (TDSB) is the largest and one of the most diverse school boards in Canada. Serving 246,000 students in 595 schools throughout Toronto, the TDSB's mission is to enable all students to reach high levels of achievement and to acquire the knowledge, skills, and values they need to become responsible members of a democratic society.

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