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Ashoka and STAPLES Business Depot Canada Collaborate to Launch First Youth Venture-GenV Social Entrepreneur Team

Toronto, ON (December 17, 2007) -- Ashoka, a global organization with a 26-year history and network of more than 1,800 social entrepreneurs serving 70 countries, today announced it has successfully launched the first Youth Venture team in Canada. Youth Venture is an initiative that is investing in and catalyzing a movement of young changemakers. My Roots, the first Canadian Youth Venture team, works to empower young people in the Malvern neighborhood of Toronto and help them realize their full potential. Through the release of their youth-led newspaper, which highlights the achievements of young people in the community, My Roots has already gained recognition and support from the Minister of Education and various Members of Parliament.

After seeing the negative portrayal of local youth in the media, Laxmi Parthasarathy and four of her friends decided to take action. Laxmi wanted to give young people in her Malvern neighborhood of Toronto a voice and begin transforming the negative stereotypes about the area. With a seed grant from Youth Venture-GenV, Laxmi's team formed My Roots, which stands for "Malvern Youth Recognizing Our Opportunity to Succeed," to publish a quarterly student-led newspaper and distribute 5,000 copies in schools, libraries and community centers. They have already gained tremendous support in the community from educational leaders and Members of Parliament.

Laxmi encourages all students to contribute to the paper whether it be through art work, stories or actual news reporting: "I think it's a great way to foster creativity within our vibrant community. I truly see Malvern to be a place of exponential opportunity and through our newspaper students are able to recognize these opportunities and realize their own potential."

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My Roots is the first of many Ventures that will launch in Canada through Youth Venture-GenV. These young changemakers are improving their communities while forming a global movement to increase their leadership skills and bring about positive social change.

“My Roots enables youth throughout Malvern to create stronger, healthier environments for themselves, their peers and their community,” said Steve Matyas, president of STAPLES Business Depot. “Together with Ashoka, STAPLES Business Depot is supporting My Roots and Youth Venture Gen-V to increase the future success of youth throughout Canada.”

Youth Venture-GenV launched in Canada this past June with the support of STAPLES Business Depot and Staples Foundation for Learning, the non-profit charitable arm of Staples, Inc. A global partnership between Staples and Youth Venture-GenV has allowed Youth Venture to launch in eight countries to date, including Canada, Argentina, Brazil, Germany, France, Spain, Belgium and the United States. The partnership marks the first time Youth Venture-GenV is working together with a leading corporation to deliver Youth Venture’s program to Canadian youth, and it reflects STAPLES Business Depot’s commitment to investing in youth learning, leadership and entrepreneurship.

About Ashoka

Ashoka is the world’s community of leading social entrepreneurs – individuals with innovative and practical ideas for addressing social needs. Working with these social entrepreneurs, Ashoka builds communities of innovators who work collectively to transform society and design new ways for the social sector to become more productive, entrepreneurial and globally integrated. For more information, please visit www.ashoka.org.

About Youth Venture-GenV

Youth Venture-GenV leads an international community of young people who are powerful now, changemakers now. Youth Venture inspires and invests in teams of young people to create and launch their own lasting social Ventures. Youth Venture then connects them into a global movement of young changemakers, who are together redefining the youth years as a time of leadership and positive social change. This is the foundation of an Everyone a Changemaker™ world – the key factor for success in every part of society. Youth Venture currently operates in 14 countries and online at www.genv.net.

About Community@Work

Through its new corporate giving program – community@work – STAPLES Business Depot is proud to partner with local community leaders to identify and support programs and initiatives focusing on three core areas: environment, education and entrepreneurship. For more information please visit www.staples.ca/community.

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About Staples Foundation for Learning

The mission of Staples Foundation for Learning, Inc. is to teach, train and inspire. Founded in 2002, the foundation has contributed more than \$11.5 million to national and local charities that provide educational opportunities and job skills for all people, with a special emphasis on disadvantaged youth. Staples Foundation for Learning has also developed lasting relationships with Boys & Girls Clubs of America, Earth Force, Hispanic Heritage Foundation and the Initiative for a Competitive Inner City. In addition, Staples Foundation for Learning supports Ashoka, through its Youth Venture-GenV initiative, in eight countries: Argentina, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, France, Germany, Spain and the United States. For more information about the foundation or how to apply for a grant, please visit www.staplesfoundation.org.
