



## NEWS RELEASE

### **CATHOLIC CHARITIES WELCOMES ITS NEWEST ASSOCIATE MEMBERS**

**COVENANT HOUSE TORONTO, BIRTHRIGHT, CARMELINA'S HOUSE-MATER DEI**

Toronto, February 2010 – The number of CATHOLIC CHARITIES' member agencies and associated organizations grew to twenty-nine this year as Covenant House Toronto, Birthright and Carmelina's Home-Mater Dei became associates of CATHOLIC CHARITIES on January 1, 2010.

The new associate members had been supported directly by ShareLife, the charitable fundraising arm of the Archdiocese of Toronto. As the needs of the archdiocese continue to grow, ShareLife is focusing greater energy to meet those needs and CATHOLIC CHARITIES will continue its work to provide these and its member agencies with continued support and service.

ShareLife Executive Director Arthur Peters indicated their support for the transition of these agencies to Catholic Charities membership. He noted that Catholic Charities has an established agency review and monitoring program which benefits all social service agencies that receive funding through ShareLife.

"We're very pleased to welcome these three community organizations as associates of CATHOLIC CHARITIES," said Michael Fullan, Executive Director of Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Toronto. "The addition of these organizations will only strengthen the work that Catholic Charities continues to do throughout the archdiocese."

CATHOLIC CHARITIES of the Archdiocese of Toronto with funding from ShareLife supports social services through its member agencies, reaching out to serve the needs of those in Toronto, Peel, York and Durham, Dufferin and Simcoe counties.

For over 95 years, CATHOLIC CHARITIES of the Archdiocese of Toronto has maintained a standard of professionalism, providing effective support and advocacy for its members. At its core is Catholic Social Teaching, focusing on the poor and marginalized, striving to build a just society that safeguards the dignity of every person.

CATHOLIC CHARITIES' action is based on a belief in the sanctity of human life, the inherent dignity of the human person and the capacity of people to grow in a community. CATHOLIC CHARITIES members serve families, young parents, youth, children, seniors, new immigrants, migrants and refugees through a broad range of services.

Drawing its strength from Catholic teaching, CATHOLIC CHARITIES reaches out to those vulnerable families and individuals in our communities. Its action is based on a belief in the sanctity of human life, the inherent dignity of the human person and the capacity of people to grow in a community. At its core is Catholic Social Teaching's focus on the poor and marginalized.

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## **PROFILES OF CATHOLIC CHARITIES' NEW ASSOCIATE ORGANIZATIONS**

### **COVENANT HOUSE**

Covenant House Toronto is Canada's largest youth shelter. It has as its mission to serve youth of the street, and to protect and to safeguard all youth with absolute respect and unconditional love. It provides 24/7 crisis care and has the widest range of services for youth under one roof, including education, counselling, health care and employment assistance.

Covenant House Toronto has helped thousands of young people move from a life on the street to a life with a future. It welcomes youth from 16 to 24 regardless of race, religion, sexual orientation or the circumstances that have brought them to our threshold.

Recognized as a leading expert in advocacy for homeless youth in Canada, it serves Canada's largest homeless youth population in Toronto. To meet the needs of youth, it provides a comprehensive range of housing and support services in collaboration with community partners.

Youth usually come to Covenant House Toronto in crisis, desperately needing help. In Covenant House Toronto, they find a safe haven that provides protection from violence and degradation. It provides for their basic human needs that includes food, clothing and medical attention in a clean and stable environment. Covenant House Toronto helps young people make positive choices, while giving them the encouragement they need to believe in themselves again and to change.

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### **CARMELINA'S HOME-MATER DEI**

Carmelina's Home - Mater Dei is a women's long-term residential-based, rehabilitation program that supports women with addiction and emotional issues. Since it began in 1997, it has grown substantially and gained credibility in the west end community where it is based. Operated by the Passionist Sisters, the program includes consultations with healthcare professionals and relies on community volunteers.

Carmelina's Home-Mater Dei has become a community of women living together. Each woman has the opportunity to think, reflect, and make changes through learning new behaviours and coping skills. It is about understanding, appreciating and loving life.

Carmelina's Home-Mater Dei also helps women through short-term outreach programs. Women in residence complete a two-year program. Women who join the Carmelina's Home program are supported in their efforts to obtain an education or reach career goals. They receive counselling on how to build healthy relationships. They learn how to reconnect with the community. They also learn practical, problem-solving and coping skills.

Carmelina's Home-Mater Dei offers a safe environment, healthy relationships, individual and family support, guidance and counselling to enable personal growth, and the ability to become independent, responsible and functioning members of society.

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## **BIRTHRIGHT**

Begun in Toronto in 1968, Birthright helps any girl or woman regardless of age, race, creed, marital or economic status, who feels distressed by an unplanned pregnancy. Birthright's approach toward helping women through their pregnancy is not moralistic; it is non-judgmental. They believe that every woman is special and deserves to be treated as a person.

Birthright is there whether a woman calls for nothing more than an anonymous pregnancy test or for friendship and support lasting through the delivery and beyond. It looks for ways that it can help, no matter how difficult the situation. Birthright helps each woman plan constructively for her future.

The Toronto chapter has grown into the world's first international crisis pregnancy service, Birthright International. In 2008, Birthright International celebrated its 40th anniversary with over 400 chapters worldwide, including Canada, the United States, and others in South Africa, Ghana, Nigeria, and Colombia. An estimated 28,000 women make their first visit to a Birthright chapter every month. Birthright also operates a 24-hour North American hotline.