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Press Release

Attention: Assignment Editor

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Preserving Parkdale:

Local food project launches community cannery, focusing on communities at risk

Toronto: The West End Food Co-op (WEFC) in partnership with the Parkdale Activity Recreation Centre (PARC) announced today the launch of a community cannery. The value-added processing program will offer skills training and community workshops in food preserving and canning.

“We can barely contain our anticipation! What an enlightened idea – especially as it encourages us to conserve our bounty which is a life skill that has been lost,” says PARC’s Executive Director Victor Willis.

Ayal Dinner, Co-op President and Farmer Market Coordinator said “I am delighted at the new capacity this funding brings to the co-op and the community; the West End Food Co-op is committed to developing strong community food programs and better capacity for healthy and culturally appropriate food in Toronto’s west end.”

The Parkdale Processing Project will begin in April 2010 with a series of community planning workshops. The processing workshops will be held during the growing season to draw from the Co-op’s producer members and provide an additional market outlet during peak harvest times.

The Co-op is the first-ever recipient of funding from the Robert Owen-Henri Lasserre Fund. The grant is from the Co-operative Development Foundation of Canada and will be administered by the Canadian Worker Co-op Federation.

The WEFC was founded in 2008 and runs the highly successful Sorauren Farmers’ Market (weekly starting in May, once a month in the winter). The Co-op’s membership is made up of farmers, consumers, workers and community partners. The Co-op completed a successful community food mapping project across the west end in the summer of 2009, and is currently offering community bonds to raise money for the future co-op store. WEFC will be holding information sessions on this community investment option over the next several months, and hopes to open the store in 2011.

PARC has been a refuge for survivors of the mental health system for 30 years. Some of the community services PARC provides include: case management/ outreach services, a daily drop-in and one of the largest food security programs in the west end. PARC actively helps to re-skill their clients.

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