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Winnipeg Harvest and The Asper Foundation unveil training facility *Asper Learning & Friendship Village to change lives through programming*

Winnipeg – Winnipeg Harvest and The Asper Foundation have announced the creation of a new training facility to help some Winnipeg Harvest clients get the skills they need to find a job.

The Asper Learning & Friendship Village at Winnipeg Harvest will provide a safe haven and gathering place for at-risk youth, immigrants, refugees, food bank clients, low-income families and individuals. They will have the opportunity to participate in programs offering life-skills training activities that will focus on personal empowerment and employment-readiness.

Today's announcement marks two significant human rights anniversaries. On April 17, 2003, Dr. Israel Asper announced his intention to establish the Canadian Museum for Human Rights in Winnipeg. Dr. Asper deliberately chose that date because it was the 21st anniversary of Queen Elizabeth signing into law the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms in 1982.

David Asper, Chair of The Asper Foundation, believes the project will have a positive impact in the lives of Winnipeg Harvest clients. "The Asper Foundation is proud to partner with Winnipeg Harvest in working to increase human dignity through education and community support. Establishing the Asper Learning & Friendship Village is a grassroots effort that will make a measurable difference in people's lives."

One of those lives already profoundly affected by available programming is that of Becky Froese. Becky began as a volunteer at Winnipeg Harvest, where she was given the opportunity to obtain the City of Winnipeg safe food handling certification and enroll in cooking classes. These newfound skills put Becky on a path to sustainability and she hasn't looked back; "Winnipeg Harvest was the first place I became socially comfortable after learning I had Asperger's. Thanks to them and now thanks to Chef Alex, I'm not as afraid of how I'm viewed by others."

David Northcott, Executive Director of Winnipeg Harvest, says, "Harvest is grateful and humbled to work with The Asper Foundation on this important initiative. The Asper Learning & Friendship Village will help our clients become more self-sufficient.

"We are absolutely delighted when someone gets the right training, makes the right connections and gets paid employment in the community. It's not the answer for all of our clients, but when it does fit for someone, we say 'Yahoo!' " Northcott says.

The Asper Learning & Friendship Village at Winnipeg Harvest is located at 1085 Winnipeg Ave. The facility will provide leadership, hope, direction and measurable successes to marginalized community members including youth, adults and seniors.

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For more information contact:

Chris Albi, Communications Coordinator, Winnipeg Harvest, 204-229-9660, media@winnipeg Harvest.org
www.winnipeg Harvest.org