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**NEWS RELEASE**  
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**MICROSKILLS 11th ANNUAL GALA CELEBRATES  
WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS, WOMEN LEADERS, YOUTH, AND CORPORATE SPIRIT**

Toronto, ON – For the 11<sup>th</sup> consecutive year, MicroSkills is honouring Women Entrepreneurs, Women Leaders, and Corporate Spirit. Its 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Gala Celebration and Awards Banquet will be held on Thursday, May 22, 2008, 6:00 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. at the Pearson Convention Centre, 2638 Steeles Avenue East (Airport Rd. & Steeles) in Brampton.

“We are privileged,” says Kay Blair, Executive Director of MicroSkills, “to work with women who come to us hoping for a chance to better their own lives and the lives of their children. We are humbled by their courage. And we are honoured to celebrate their achievements each year at our Gala.”

Each year at this event MicroSkills pays tribute to women who have overcome serious challenges to pursue their dream of becoming self-employed. During this evening of celebration, three graduates of MicroSkills’ Women’s Self-Employment Program will receive the **MicroSkills Entrepreneur of the Year Award** for their achievements in successfully launching new businesses.

**Elena Espinoza** creates original Canadian abstract-expressionist landscape murals for the home and office that are distributed through her home business *Studio Espinoza*. Elena’s award has been sponsored by Rina Rovinelli, founder of Maximum Woman, Sophia Daley, who started her business, Kinky Creations, last year, and Marcia Francis, owner of Freedom Support Services. All three women are past graduates of the MicroSkills Self-Employment Training for Women program.

**Yvette Joseph’s** business, *Matrix Staffing Solution*, specializes in providing employment opportunities by matching unemployed clients with employers in the manufacturing, transportation and administration fields. Yvette’s award has been sponsored by Alterna Savings.

**Hoyam H. Abbas** distributes Sudanese products such as henna, tattoos, and traditional cloth through her company *Sudanese House*. Hoyam’s award has been sponsored by Toronto Hydro.

Also at this event, the 3<sup>rd</sup> **Margot Franssen Leadership Award** will be given to **Mary Anne Chambers**. Ms. Chambers, Past Minister of Training, Colleges & Universities, Past Minister of Children & Youth Services and Retired MPP for Scarborough East, is being recognized for her extensive work with governments and communities that has led to improved access and inclusion for women and immigrants. Created in honour of Margot Franssen, well-known entrepreneur and social activist, this award recognizes a woman who combines outstanding leadership in the private or public sector with a passionate commitment to the advancement of women and girls.

This year the **Spider Jones Youth Leadership Award** will be presented for the first time. This award recognizes youth who have exhibited excellent achievement and who are role models to other youth within MicroSkills’ programs and the community. Created in honour of Chuck “Spider” Jones, the award embodies the drive, determination and concern for at-risk youth that the successful athlete and radio broadcaster demonstrates on a daily basis. The inaugural recipients of this award, **Althea Dyce** and **Korey Miller**, are being honoured for their outstanding performance in the Youth Employment and Local Leadership (Y.E.L.L) Program. Having met in the program, Althea and Korey are now business partners in their own company, *Bizonia.com*.

To complete the evening, the **MicroSkills Corporate Spirit Award** will honour CH2M HILL Canada Ltd. for its active support of diversity in the workplace and the community. “We are honouring CH2M HILL for being a conscientious corporate citizen that supports and participates in a variety of local, provincial, and national

charitable initiatives,” says Kay Blair. “For many years an active partner with its community, CH2M HILL has been a placement host of MicroSkills’ Information Technology clients since 1998 and has enabled a member of its team to be a long-standing member of Microskills’ Board of Directors. This organization consistently has dedicated time, energy, and resources to make a difference in the lives of many individuals. More and more companies see social responsibility as a business asset, and we want to recognize those companies, like CH2M HILL, that help women, youth, and new immigrants realize their potential.”

**Proud sponsors of the MicroSkills Gala include:**

The Co-operators, Toronto Hydro Electric System, Alterna Savings, Enbridge Gas Distribution, Woodbine Entertainment Group, Margot Franssen, Credit Union Central of Ontario, SYSCO Food Services of Toronto, Certified General Accountants, Scotia Bank and OMNI Television.

**About Community MicroSkills Development Centre:**

MicroSkills is a multicultural, non-profit, community based organization, providing settlement, training, employment and self employment services in North Etobicoke. For over twenty years, MicroSkills has empowered women, youth, and newcomers to build better lives and careers. With an innovative and holistic approach unique in its sector, MicroSkills trains, guides and mentors over 20,000 adults and youth annually – one life at a time.

**For more information:**

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