

?Lift one another up? Peel CAS hosting fundraiser for Trailblazers Youth Centre

By **Zachary Roman**

There's an upcoming fundraiser for Peel Child and Youth Services (Peel CAS).

On May 25, Peel CAS will host a dinner fundraiser from 7 to 9:30 p.m. at Milestones Grill & Bar: Heartland Centre in Mississauga.

Courtney Charles, vice-president of basketball and franchise operations at Raptors 905, the Toronto Raptors' NBA G League affiliate, will serve as special guest emcee. The Raptors 905 mascot, Stripes, will be in attendance too.

The fundraiser is being held in support of Peel CAS' new Trailblazers Youth Centre. The Centre was launched on August 31, 2022 and is located in Mississauga.

According to Peel CAS, it developed the Trailblazers Youth Centre to "create an innovative and equitable service delivery model developed and led by youth for children and youth to access exceptional services and supports to thrive, belong, build life-long connections, and position themselves as leaders."

Programs and services offered at the Centre align with Ontario's child welfare redesign strategy. It offers opportunities for fun and recreation while also offering opportunities to learn life skills and access well-being support services.

Some key areas of focus at the Centre include: health and wellness, employment and education, cultural identity, physical literacy, life skills, financial literacy, youth justice, anti-human trafficking education, housing, relationship building, and leadership.

Mallory Antonello, Communications Consultant for Peel CAS, said Milestones Heartland has gone above and beyond for the upcoming fundraiser. The restaurant is offering complimentary appetizers and soft drinks, as well as the event space and wait staff.

"They have such big hearts and they wanted to give back and get involved," said Antonello. "We're really grateful to them."

Trailblazers was chosen as the name for the Youth Centre because it was the winning submission from over 90 name suggestions contributed by youth who were, or are currently, involved with Peel CAS.

The contributor, who was not named, said "a trailblazer is someone that is not afraid to try something new. They pioneer their own path, even if it means taking the path less beaten. They're brave, innovative and don't back down. As a crown ward, I know all kids in care will appreciate this centre, not just because of what they can do there but because this centre represents the bright, trailblazing future ahead of each and every youth."

The Centre was built thanks to fundraising efforts by the Peel Children's Aid Foundation which raised over \$500,000 for it. Major donors included Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment (MLSE), the Jays Care Foundation, and Raptors 905.

Antonello said programming at the Centre was developed by hearing from youth served by CAS directly.

"We want to be able to provide supports that give them the opportunity to connect with others and position themselves as leaders," said Antonello.

Peel CAS is hoping to raise \$25,000 at its May 25 fundraiser to support the programs and services offered at the Trailblazers Youth Centre. To reserve a spot at the fundraising dinner, those interested can visit tinyurl.com/pcasdinner. Donations will be accepted prior to or at the event and tax receipts will be issued.

?The event will feature influential speakers who have helped develop the Centre itself and all of the programs and services it provides,? said Antonello. ?It does really take a village to help raise? children and youth. It's just amazing to see what we can accomplish when we can all come together and support one another? really, that's what the event is all about: community coming together to make a difference in the lives of people who need it.?

?It's just a celebration of community connectivity and what we can do to help lift one another up,? she added.