



CASEY HOUSE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**CASEY HOUSE MARKS 20 YEARS OF COMPASSIONATE CARE  
Canada's first free-standing HIV/AIDS hospice continues to evolve as experience  
of disease changes**

**February 19, 2008 (Toronto, ON)** – On March 1, 2008, Casey House will celebrate its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary at a very special fundraiser gala, **Casey House's SnowBall 2008 | Passion**, marking an important milestone in the evolution of Casey House, a specialty hospital serving people affected by HIV/AIDS.

The night will include the inaugural presentation of The Casey Awards, in loving remembrance of Casey House founder June Callwood and recognizing leaders in the fields of HIV/AIDS care and social justice advocacy whose actions reflect her fine example. The first award will be presented to the family of June Callwood in memoriam. Three other individuals will be celebrated that evening for their voluntarism and leadership in HIV/AIDS advocacy and social justice.

"While June Callwood herself really was one-of-a-kind, her values were something all of us can share," says Jaime Watt, Casey House Board Chair. "That's why it made sense to use this anniversary to recognize individuals whose own values demonstrate the same imaginative, pioneering spirit and deep-seated compassion she so brilliantly modeled."

Now two decades since Casey House first opened its doors, the landscape of HIV/AIDS continues to be unstable. Infection rates in the Toronto area are expected to increase by 39 percent by 2012, affecting a diverse swath of people, with women now accounting for 28 percent of new adult positive test reports. At the same time, people with HIV/AIDS are living longer with the disease than ever before. This "graying of AIDS" has led to a host of complications not anticipated twenty years ago, including opportunistic cancers, osteoporosis, diabetes and cardiovascular disease. As a result, people aging with AIDS can be seriously debilitated and experience significant social isolation and depression. Forty-three percent of Casey House clients are over 50 years of age.

"The experience of HIV/AIDS is one of constant change and so Casey House is always evolving its approach to care," says Stephanie Karapita, CEO of Casey House. "Our clients require a continuum of care as they live with this terrible disease. The goal is to keep people with HIV/AIDS as healthy and independent as possible, in their own homes." Casey House is responding to this pressing urban health issue by reformatting its community-based care, continuing to provide clients with ready access to nursing and mental health experts in HIV/AIDS care, along with opportunities to interact with other people living with HIV/AIDS.

"Twenty years ago when we opened the doors of Casey House, the world was a terribly cruel place for people with AIDS," says Pearse Murray, Chair of the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Committee and a volunteer for over two decades. "Casey House brought something very

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different into being, something that was revolutionary. Casey House continues to be a model of compassionate and non-judgmental HIV/AIDS care, where no client is a number. Everyone is treated with respect, and most importantly, love. The essence of Casey House has always been love, then and now.”

Founded in 1988 by June Callwood, Casey House is the first free-standing HIV/AIDS hospice in Canada. A unique, compassionate approach to care has been evolving since that time, allowing Casey House, a specialty hospital with community programming, to deliver on its mission to provide exemplary treatment, support and palliative care for people living with HIV/AIDS.

Bios of the recipients of The Casey Awards will be made available after the announcement March 1.

***A note: In tribute to the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Casey House, Toronto Mayor David Miller has declared March 1 – 8, 2008 to be “Casey House Week.”***

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