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PRESS RELEASE

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MicroSkills Launches Spider Jones Youth Leadership Award

MicroSkills is pleased to announce that the inaugural **Spider Jones Youth Leadership Award** will be presented at its 11th Annual Gala Celebration and Awards Banquet on Thursday, May 22nd 2008 at the Pearson Convention Centre in Brampton.

Created in honour of Chuck "Spider" Jones, the award embodies the drive, determination, and concern for youth-at-risk that the successful athlete and radio broadcaster demonstrates on a daily basis. This award recognizes youth who have exhibited excellent achievement and who are role models to other youth within MicroSkills' programs and the community.

Jones expects this award to be very meaningful to the young people of the community. He believes it will inspire them to see the challenges in their lives as temporary setbacks that can be overcome, not as obstacles preventing them from reaching their potential. Jones has the same message for each group of young people he addresses: "Life hands us fate. Destiny is what we do with it." His message is clear: Stay focused, find out what you're good at, and do it.

Althea Dyce and **Korey Miller**, inaugural recipients of the Youth Award, personify the award's intention. Both of these young people have faced personal challenges and experienced conflict with the law, but both also had a desire to improve their lives. Independently, they arrived at MicroSkills' Youth Centre where they received business skills and mentoring. Now good friends, they met while participating in the Centre's Youth Employment and Local Leadership Program (Y.E.L.L.) "When I first came to MicroSkills," says Althea, "it forced me to think about my future. For young people, the financial rewards of crime are tempting, and crime certainly makes money – but it doesn't pay."

During their time in the Y.E.L.L. program, Althea and Korey learned time management skills, developed a strong work ethic, and recognized the importance of persistence and intellectual integrity. Their work produced high-quality results time after time, and it wasn't long before peers were seeking their advice and support. When they realized they shared the dream of starting a business, Althea and Korey pooled their ideas and energy to establish *Bizonia.com*, an online search engine for small businesses. It was a major undertaking that took much thought and more effort, but never once did they think about giving up.

Spider Jones knows the challenges these young people faced and the courage it took to overcome them. "It's tough for these kids" he says. "In [community housing], you are conditioned to feel you don't have the right to dream big. You've got to start believing in yourself before others will believe in you."

Althea and Korey have been selected to receive the Spider Jones Youth Leadership Award for their outstanding contributions during the Y.E.L.L. program funded by the City of Toronto. "This award is the culmination of the work we do on behalf of the youth in our community," says Kay Blair, MicroSkills' Executive Director. "People love to be acknowledged and recognized for their efforts, and it's especially important to validate the exceptional efforts of our youth to rise above their circumstances and start building a successful life for themselves." Our congratulations go out to Althea and Korey for their outstanding achievement as participants in the Y.E.L.L. program, for successfully building *Bizonia.com*, and for inspiring so many of their peers in their journey to their success!

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.

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