



For Youth Initiative representative Lekan Olawoye, and Premier Dalton McGuinty.

## Current FYI projects include after-school programming and youth voter participation

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"The Youth Challenge Fund has been a tremendous success, bringing together people who love their city, who want the best for our young people and who will not let guns or gangs take the hopes and dreams of our children," said Premier Dalton McGuinty at a Sept. 16 event to celebrate and acknowledge the fundraising achievements.

The province has given about \$30 million to complement the \$15 million raised by the private sector and the United Way to support the Youth Challenge Fund since 2006.

Since that time, the Youth Challenge Fund has helped to support 111 youth-led programs in the city's priority neighborhoods, enabling more than 5,000 young people to learn skills and become

involved with their communities in positive ways.

Current FYI projects include after-school programming and the development of a program aiming to bring youth issues and voter participation to the forefront of next year's municipal election.

For more details on how to get involved locally with the For Youth Initiative, one can go online to [www.foryouth.ca](http://www.foryouth.ca)

## FYI benefits from Youth Challenge Fund

Provincial support passed along to For Youth Initiative

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Young people across Toronto are mobilizing to help their peers through the Youth Challenge Fund, which is great news for the York-based For Youth Initiative (FYI), says its executive director.

"Our framework is youth serving youth, youth being leaders of today, youth knowing what they need and developing the capacity so they can be at the forefront of their own change and the forefront of their own liberation," said Lekan Olawoye.

At 26, Olawoye is one of the older employees of FYI, which has flourished in the community. When FYI opened its doors in 2000, it had two staff members and a \$400,000 budget. Since then, it has expanded to more than 20 staff members with \$3 million to spend each year.

The funding provided by the Youth Challenge Fund allows the organization to provide programs teaching life skills, arts, recreation, as well as after-school programs, female specific programming and a quarterly magazine called *Victory*.

The main office at 1653 Keele St. is undergoing an expansion and the group recently opened another location at 1669 Eglinton Ave. W., which is providing settlement services to new immigrants.

"We support (newcomers) with a better understanding of the community and the structures of the society that they are in," said Olawoye.

The efforts of key players in the Youth Challenge Fund have not been overlooked by the province.

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