

**Hip-hop helps Calgary's youth find a "positive" outlet for their creative energy**

*Federal government employee launches initiative aimed at helping young people get involved in music, dance and theatre*

*By John Carta*

**Sept. 7, 2006 – Calgary, AB** – Melanie Haywood is on a mission to give Calgary's youth a safe and positive outlet for their creative energy.

Four years ago, Ms. Haywood and a group of friends organized what would become annual events showcasing the hip-hop culture. Their goal was to encourage Calgary's youth to perform and get involved in music, dance, theatre and the spoken word. This year, the group launched Holla Productions Association of Calgary and is gearing up for the troupe's July 2007 show at the Vertigo Theatre. Ms. Haywood, 25, and four other twenty-something Calgaryans sit on the association's executive board and manage its events.

"I just love doing it," Ms. Haywood said. "I get to be involved with the city's youth and I get to involve them in something creative. They don't have a lot of creative outlets that are 'urban' in nature.

Holla Productions relies heavily on sponsorships from local businesses and has been able to turn some of this financing into bursaries that help young people pursue post-secondary education.

Ms. Haywood currently works at the Public Health Agency of Canada's Alberta/Northwest Territories regional office. But she has big plans for Holla Productions. She and her colleagues hope to establish a dance, music and theatre school and a drop-in centre to provide social resources for local youth.

Ms. Haywood is one example of Government of Canada employees making a difference in their communities. Along with their regular volunteering, thousands of public servants participate in the annual Government of Canada Workplace Charitable Campaign (GCWCC), the largest workplace charitable project in Canada. In 2005, federal public servants contributed more than \$29.5 million to GCWCC in 113 communities nation-wide. GCWCC 2006 kicks off on September 7 and will run until November 22.



*Melanie Haywood formed a hip-hop performance group to encourage Calgary's youth to get involved in music, dance and theatre*

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