



## Everyday heroes to receive national SEDI Awards

*Award winners will be celebrated at a gala dinner and fundraiser on November 3 in Toronto*

Toronto, August 11, 2010 – Social and Enterprise Development Innovations (SEDI), a charitable organization that helps low-income Canadians gain financial independence, today announced the inspiring recipients of the fifth SEDI Awards. The 2010 winners and runners-up will be celebrated at the SEDI Awards gala dinner and fundraiser on November 3 at the Arcadian Court in Toronto. The winners will be honoured with a video tribute and introduced by celebrity presenters, including marketing entrepreneur Arlene Dickinson of Dragons' Den and Pat Foran, CTV's consumer reporter and member of the Task Force on Financial Literacy.

The award salutes everyday people who have overcome poverty and achieved extraordinary accomplishments with the help of programs offered by SEDI and its community partners across Canada in the areas of financial literacy, saving and asset building, and entrepreneurship. The award also honours remarkable staff members of community groups nationwide for their commitment to helping others make their way out of poverty.

"The winners and runners-up's stories of determination and triumph over the odds will captivate the hearts of those who share the vision of building a society where people can realize their full economic and human potential," said Peter Nares, SEDI Founder and Executive Director. "Their poignant stories are glimpses of the society we dream of, a society where all Canadians have opportunities to learn, take risks, invest wisely and participate in the economic mainstream."

The winners and runners-up for the 2010 SEDI Awards are as follows:

### **Passion for Financial Literacy Award**

Acknowledges a staff member of a nonprofit organization who is creative, passionate and has shown extraordinary commitment to promoting financial education in the community with the help of a SEDI program.

#### Winner: Brian Smith, Montreal, Que.

For over 12 years, Brian Smith has been providing hope of a brighter economic future to youth, newcomers and women in Montreal. An Employment Counsellor and Financial Coach at Carrefour Jeunesse-Emploi de Côte-des-Neiges, Brian was first introduced to financial literacy by SEDI. Since then, his passion to educate youth has been motivating others to combat poverty in Quebec through training in personal finance and savings. He makes recommendations to governments, develops programs for community organizations, creates alliances with the public and private sectors and seeks creative ways to attract the community to financial literacy programs, from hosting a pancake breakfast with DJs to promoting the use of video conferencing to provide personal finance courses to a wider scale of participants across Quebec simultaneously.

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Runner-up: Chantal Beaver, Halifax, N.S.

Since 2007, financial literacy marvel Chantal Beaver has been changing lives in Halifax. Within three years, the YWCA Halifax's Director of Women's Services was able to push the organization's financial literacy work to new heights, bringing the message of financial literacy to over 30,000 people and championing the inclusion of financial literacy in programs for families and women at a critical point in their lives. With the help of SEDI's My Child's Future program, Chantal and her team enabled the creation of over 125 RESPs for children of low and moderate income families. Her team has delivered financial literacy education to over 250 newcomers to Canada and was the catalyst for the inclusion of financial literacy elements in the Newcomer's Guide to Halifax Regional Municipality.

**Investing in the Future Award**

Celebrates a graduate from SEDI's Independent Living Account (ILA) program who has succeeded in moving from transitional housing, such as a shelter or hostel, to his/her own home and laid the groundwork for a brighter future.

Winner: John A. MacDonald, Toronto, Ont.

John A. MacDonald went from homelessness to economic independence as he refused to let life's tribulations keep him down. When he arrived at the Salvation Army Harbour Light, a Toronto transitional housing program, he was struggling with addiction and a history of conflicts with the law. With the help of Harbour Light and SEDI's Independent Living Account (ILA) program, he became motivated to open a bank account, save and move out on his own. John was instrumental in bringing Harbour Light residents together to participate in the program's financial literacy training by taking the initiative to contact SEDI and helping to set up the sessions. Today, John is employed, has rented an apartment and is focusing on achieving his dream of becoming a boilermaker again.

Runner-up: Timothy Parker, Toronto, Ont.

Canadian born Timothy Parker grew up in the U.S. and was forced to leave the country as, due to a legal technicality, he was unable to obtain U.S. citizenship. At the age of 46, Timothy found himself back in Canada and a stranger in his country of birth. With no Canadian ID, friends, family or housing, he ended up in a Toronto shelter, Fort York Residence. Despite his ordeal, he refused to give up and at the shelter he enrolled in SEDI's Independent Living Account (ILA) program. The program helped him save to rent his own place and overcome homelessness. He is now thriving at his new job as a butcher and is well on his way towards realizing his goal of bringing his three-year old son to join him in Canada.

**Success in Self-Employment Award**

Honours an aspiring entrepreneur who defied the odds to become a successful business owner, with the help of a self-employment program developed by SEDI or by a SEDI community partner.

Winner: Benjamin (Royalz) Kwofie, Toronto, Ont.

A troubled teenager from a broken home, Benjamin (Royalz) Kwofie turned his life around after his mother passed away. He decided to channel his grief and anger into becoming a fashion designer. At age 23, Benjamin was living on his own, working night shifts and sleeping only a few hours a day while developing his clothing line. His determination paid off. In 2009, Royalz Wear became the first Canadian fashion line to be included in the Latino Fashion Week in Chicago. His work has gotten the attention of Governor General Michaëlle Jean and prominent hip hop artists. He praises organizations such as the Remix Project and Youth Employment Services YES, a SEDI community partner, for his success. He is currently sharpening his entrepreneurial skills and refining his business operations with the help of YES' BizStart program.

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Runner-up: Sunny Gervan, Toronto, Ont.

Sunny Gervan is an inspiration to her fellow graduates from the BIZ Futures Self-Employment program at the Toronto Business Development Centre, a SEDI community partner for almost 20 years. She managed to start and grow a full-service architectural renovation and restoration company, Design Revolution, in 2007 while battling chronic debilitating fatigue. Through the BIZ Futures program, she was able to create a business plan and develop the confidence to believe that she could be a successful entrepreneur and support herself despite the health challenges she faces. Three years later, her company is booming and managed to grow even during the recent economic downturn. The company's recent expansion into custom kitchen design and supply is generating new business and jobs.

**Judging committee:**

Ann Hoy  
Director, Ontario Ministry of Economic Development and Trade

Ed Hobbs  
General Manager, Toronto Business Development Centre

Jessica Goldberg  
Senior Manager, Strategy and Operations Consulting, Deloitte

Kerry Peacock  
Executive Vice-President, Branch Banking, TD Canada Trust

Melanie Buffel  
Program Facilitator and Money Coach, Family Services of Greater Vancouver; Coordinator, BC Asset Building Collaborative; 2008 SEDI Award Winner

Michel R. Leduc  
Vice-President, Public and Corporate Affairs, Sun Life Financial

Phil Brown  
General Manager, Shelter, Support and Housing Administration, City of Toronto

Sasha Nagy  
Online Editor, The Globe and Mail

Sean Stanleigh  
Your Business Editor, The Globe and Mail

The 2010 SEDI Awards gala dinner and fundraiser will be hosted by CBC's Suhana Meharchand and will include a keynote address by W. Edmund Clark, President and CEO, TD Bank Financial Group. To buy tickets for the event, please visit [www.sedi.org/sediawards](http://www.sedi.org/sediawards).

## **About SEDI**

SEDI is a national charitable organization that uses innovative approaches to help low-income Canadians gain financial independence. Since 1986, SEDI has worked with businesses, governments and more than 800 not-for-profit organizations across Canada on financial literacy, saving and asset building, and entrepreneurship initiatives. SEDI's expertise allows it to influence public policy, opening the way for Canadians to enter the social and economic mainstream. To learn more about SEDI's initiatives, the Canadian Centre for Financial Literacy and the TD Financial Literacy Grant Fund, please visit [www.theccfl.ca](http://www.theccfl.ca) and [www.sedi.org/grantfund](http://www.sedi.org/grantfund).

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