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## **Community Safety Leaders Empower Youth and Families to Create a Better Ottawa**

(Ottawa)—To mark Crime Prevention Week 2011, Crime Prevention Ottawa is celebrating the inspiring efforts of last night's Community Safety Awards all week by profiling the dedicated volunteers, workers and programs that strive to make Ottawa a better place to live. Among the eight winners are two that are truly making a difference in the lives of young people and families: City of Ottawa employee Mohamud Hassan and the youth anti-violence program, YOUCAN.

Through his work with the city, City of Ottawa Community Safety Leader Award winner Mohamud Hassan strives to give people the support and tools they need to be successful in life. A Somali immigrant, he established the Somali Youth Initiative six years ago and helped 75 Somali youth overcome barriers, get skills and find employment through coaching and workshops. The initiative was so successful that it was expanded to encompass all visible minorities and eventually all youth. Today, the Youth Initiative serves more than 200 youth in Ottawa each year.

In his current role as a Community Liaison Officer, Hassan connects hundreds of youth and families living in poverty, new to Canada, and facing barriers to employment, education and training, to the services that can help them. As part of the City's Service Excellence vision to provide excellent customer service, Mohamud helped establish the innovative one stop service "Community Hub" at the City's Social Service Centre South Office. The Hub gives people easy access to immigration, employment, budgeting and taxation services all under one roof. The approach helps ensure that people don't fall through the cracks.

Non-profit group YOUCAN, the winner of the Youth Community Safety Program Award, is a "for youth and by youth" initiative that aims to engage marginalized youth in social justice, and teach them to prevent violence and create peaceful communities. YOUCAN's training programs and workshops equip young people with the skills they need to have healthy relationships and to address conflict in their lives.

Run by youth leaders, YOUCAN's programs teach youth communication, negotiation and anger management skills. The result is that participants develop greater self-confidence. They change their behaviours and attitudes. Most importantly, they begin to believe in themselves. Established in Ottawa 14 years ago, YOUCAN has since trained close to 30,000 Canadian youth. Hundreds of them have gone on to become YOUCAN Trainers.

For more information about Crime Prevention Ottawa, please visit [www.CrimePreventionOttawa.ca](http://www.CrimePreventionOttawa.ca).

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