

Press release

For immediate release

Desjardins Asset Management and The Ys of Québec create Montreal's first instructional materials centre for mathematics, science and technology

(Montreal, January 27, 2009) – Thanks to an association between Desjardins Asset Management and The Ys of Québec, the 218 students at Marguerite-Bourgeoys primary school in Montreal's Centre-South district, part of the *Commission scolaire de Montréal*, will now be able to enjoy the city's first instructional materials centre for mathematics, science and technology. This initiative is part of the *Adopt-a-School* program, which enables primary schools in disadvantaged areas to obtain strategic financial assistance to meet their needs.

A much-needed centre

At a cost of \$54,000, the new instructional materials centre is equipped with a wide range of state-of-the-art equipment designed to encourage students to experiment and broaden their horizons by participating in concrete and meaningful learning activities. "This new centre will do a great deal to stimulate our students' interest and creativity in the areas of math, science and technology," said Louise Paquette, principal of Marguerite-Bourgeoys primary school.

Convincing results

The *Adopt-a-School* program was launched in 2006 through a partnership between Desjardins Asset Management and The Ys of Québec. To date, Desjardins Asset Management has "adopted" three schools in Montreal's Centre-South district: Marguerite-Bourgeoys, Champlain and Jean-Baptiste-Meilleur. After the opening of a computer lab at Champlain primary school, the instructional materials centre at Marguerite-Bourgeoys is the second large-scale project to have been completed under the auspices of this program, the only one of its kind in Quebec. The three schools have also been granted bursaries to enable almost 80 children since 2007 to enjoy the unforgettable experience of attending the YMCA's Kanawana summer camp.

Involvement appreciated

Adopt-a-School is an innovative project that encourages members of the business community to invest in primary schools in disadvantaged areas. Thanks to the involvement and financial participation of Desjardins Asset Management and its financial partners, the adopted schools are now much better equipped to offer their students an enriching academic experience.

"Although Desjardins Asset Management has been involved in education for several years, it was really with the *Adopt-a-School* program that we made the decision, along with our main business partners, to adopt three primary schools and invest over \$800,000 in this program," explained Jacques Lussier, Vice-President, Securities Investments and Financial Engineering, at Desjardins Asset Management. "Given our activity sector—investment and asset management—we obviously had a special interest in the project to create an instructional materials centre for math, science and technology. We are proud to be contributing to the development of the intellectual curiosity of the next generation."

Adopt-a-School: an invaluable program

“The expertise of The Ys of Québec in community work and our more recent experience in education over the past several years allowed us to take on the role of facilitator in the *Adopt-a-School* program,” explained Stéphane Vaillancourt, President and Chief Executive Officer of The Ys of Québec. “We work with the schools to identify projects that will meet their needs directly, and we also act as project manager once the project has been accepted by a financial partner.”

The entire project supported by Desjardins Asset Management included the creation of a computer lab and an instructional materials centre, but the invested funds will also be used to rent school buses for field trips (to the Planetarium, for example) and to set up extra-curricular activities and enrichment programs, such as workshops on self-expression.

“The program also offers long-term scholarships to encourage students and help their families support them financially when they continue on to higher education at college and university. To make this happen, and to help other schools, The Ys of Québec are looking for new financial partners, particularly in the neighbourhoods of Pointe-Saint-Charles and Hochelaga-Maisonneuve, where the need is also pressing,” added Mr. Vaillancourt.

About Desjardins Asset Management

Desjardins Asset Management, a subsidiary of Desjardins Group, the largest integrated cooperative financial group in Canada, is a group of experts in securities, real estate and mortgage investments. Desjardins Asset Management has more than 290 employees in its offices located in Montreal, Quebec City, Toronto and Vancouver.

www.desjardinsassetmanagement.com

About The Ys of Québec

The YMCA of Greater Montreal, the first in North America, was founded in November 1851. The mission of this charitable organization is to develop the full potential of individuals in mind, body and spirit and to foster self-reliance in persons, families and communities. Its 10 centres are visited every year by over 100,000 participants who benefit from its many programs ranging from community development, international development and child development to language courses and physical fitness programs. The Ys of Québec is a member of the Canadian network of 54 YMCA associations. www.yquebec.org

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