The Olive Branch of Hope 2019 Reflection

The Olive Branch of Hope (TOBOH), a non-profit organization in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) serving women of African ancestry battling with cancer is proud to report on a successful year. With your help our team has worked tirelessly to serve our community and beyond. From January – December giving hope to those in need has been our priority. We have captured some of the highlights for this past year.

Life is Not Fair, but God is Good Annual Prayer Breakfast Seminar

Every year men and women from all walks of life gather to encourage and strengthen each other at the annual Prayer Breakfast. This event is held the last Saturday in January and has grown to over 200 attendees. Having this many people out on a Saturday morning in wintery weather to pray and connect with each other is testament to the unfulfilled needs of the people and the desire for support.

Sometimes life seems to bring nothing but a string of defeat and disappointments which forces us to rely heavily on our faith. With this faith, we can forge ahead and continue to put forth our best effort; believing that something good is still in store for us. Without faith, we would easily give up and accept what comes our way; turning our dreams to dust.

Faith, Hope and Love are the three-legged stool which TOBOH uses as its pillars: -

Faith to believe nothing is impossible! Upon receiving the diagnosis, we are stripped of the life we knew. We are forced to accept a new normal after chemotherapy and radiation, which leaves us depleted of all energy. It is our faith, that keeps us going. It is faith, that revives and strengthens our hope.

Hope is like the sun, which seeps through the dark clouds reminding us that even though today might appear dull and dreary, tomorrow will be sunny and bright. Hope is also an assurance that through continued research, there will one day be a breakthrough. Continued research aims to improve outcome for everyone affected by cancer, and there lies our Hope.

Love is the voice of silence in the soul that patiently awaits the support needed to conquer this disease. Love is from supporters and organizations like TOBOH believing every woman deserves a chance to live. Love is the resilience and continued drive to do whatever needed to provide services that enables women to live their dream throughout the continuum of treatment.
Golden Girls Project:

At The Olive Branch of Hope we believe that engaging seniors in art therapy can challenge their creative self and sharpen their minds as well as enhance cognitive function. With this knowledge we develop a special harping therapy program to assist those diagnosed and living with breast cancer 55 and over. Musical art therapy can be beneficial to cancer survivors. Gathering seniors in a social setting where they can relate with other survivors and non-survivors is also comforting for them. Creating art can bring hidden or forgotten feelings to the surface and give seniors a new outlet for their feelings as they relieve the stress that a diagnosis and treatment brings.

Our harping sessions were well received. Participants commented that they found them relaxing and soothing to the mind. These sessions were held in Brampton, Durham and Toronto.

Think Beyond Love Pink Women’s Health Conference
Breast Cancer Awareness month

Breast cancer awareness month began with our annual Think Beyond Love Pink Conference. The name was originally adopted to represent our special project sponsored previously by Women’s College Hospital and the CURE Foundation. It was initially geared to younger women between the age of 18-49, and has a specific focus on health education and awareness. This year’s conference was very well attended and received. The evaluations led us to believe that the community is ready to embrace these types of gathering and is hungry to learn more about the various health issues. Our participating panel ranged from doctors, researchers, clinicians, psychologist to protection planners. Our speakers were engaging, and the breakout workshops were informative and educating. It was a delight to host a conference that centred on the needs of the people based on previously received feedback from diligently perused evaluations.

One of our highlights this year was our second Caribbean outreach to Jamaica. Our commitment to support women of African Ancestry regardless of geographical location is made possible through the ever-increasing ways to utilize social media. This medium has helped to capture the real needs of the people and has been instrumental in helping them prevent and cope with cancer. The needs in the Caribbean are great and the incidence of breast cancer is on the rise. Late and advanced diagnosis is a real problem, but we are committed to saving the lives of our women. We do this, by developing and sharing knowledge of the disease and encouraging women to participate in screening.

2019 has been an exciting year for us. We continue to make a difference by reaching out to our Caribbean sisters through the umbrella theme: Heart, Soul & Science.

Creating a Bridge Through Heart Soul & Science
Sharing the message of “HOPE & Healing” in an effort to Collaborate and Conquer Cancer.

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<th>Heart = Connection</th>
<th>Soul = Energy</th>
<th>Science = a Hope</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>• We visualize our happiness in our heart.</td>
<td>• Our soul connects us.</td>
<td>• Science gives us hope. We know that we will win in the fight against cancer if we work together and if we share our knowledge.</td>
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<td>• We share moments of heartfelt connection, and practice awareness.</td>
<td>• Our soul helps us share our experiences and our knowledge.</td>
<td>• The goal is to help foster collaboration and coordination between many aspects of breast cancer care, diagnosis and treatment.</td>
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<td>• We work towards scientific advances that directly benefit cancer patients.</td>
<td>• Our soul helps us create a cancer-free future where we can share our energy, inspire others with our experiences and get inspired by them.</td>
<td>• The list of innovations in cancer care worldwide is extensive and continues to grow with great insight and great people working together.</td>
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<td>• We give purpose to our life.</td>
<td>• Our soul desires to seek deep inner peace.</td>
<td>• All scientific innovation is accomplished on a continuum and we want to encourage these advances and move forward in all aspects of cancer care and treatments.</td>
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