

# The Ghanaian-Canadian Association of Ontario (G.C.A.O)

## 2020 Annual Report



### **Mission & Vision**

Our mission is to enhance the living standards of Ghanaian-Canadians in Ontario through social, cultural, and educational programs, and through other diaspora initiatives. Our vision is to build a strong, inclusive, vibrant, and sustainable community that provides support services and resources to enhance the well-being of Ghanaian-Canadians in Ontario.

## Message From The President



As GCAO continues its work in the provision of excellent services and support to the Ghanaian community, we know the success of this organization relates directly to you, the community and volunteers.

Since the inception of the COVID-19 pandemic, Volunteers from our community and GCAO leaders came together to write grants to support the community. It was made clear from the diverse background that we needed our community to remain united, supported and educated on how to combat this COVID pandemic.

In August 2020, The Canadian Red Cross Society granted the Ghanaian-Canadian Association of Ontario (GCAO) with \$99,844.00 to enhance the services GCAO currently provides the community to mitigate the impact of COVID-19. This is the first time we have been awarded such large support and so

we piloted various projects with the goal of rolling it out based on the success of the project. With this amazing contribution, the funds were specifically used to help increase our capacity to reach our seniors, children, youth, women, frontline workers, and the vulnerable through services such as virtual educational support, health & wellness, food support, welfare and compassionate support as well as distribution of personal protection equipment.

### Project Reach

We estimated to serve a total of 560 people; however, we reached **3857** people across Ontario

- **336** Children
- **2334** Youth and Adults
- **681** Low income families or people living in poverty
- **1186** Seniors and Elders (not in care)
- **594** homes have non-working parents
- **20** Cities within Ontario



Thank you to our outstanding volunteers and community members for availing themselves to serve and be served. We hope to be able to do much more in the coming future.

### Activities per number of participants by age

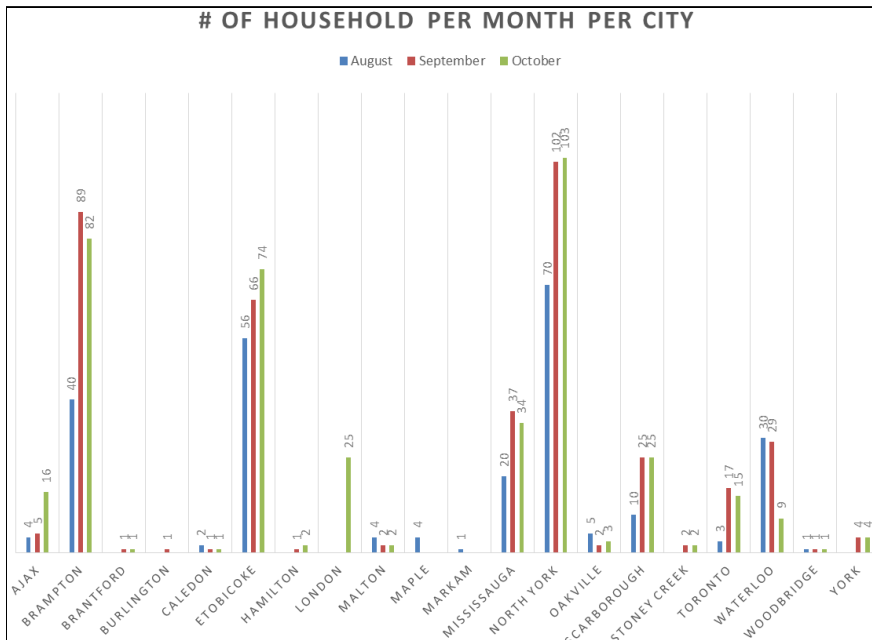
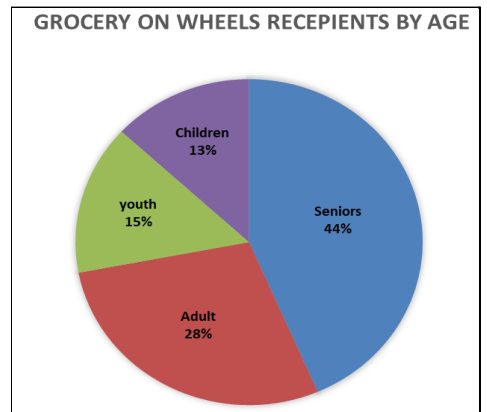
<i>Activities Performed</i>	<b>65+</b>	<b>18-64</b>	<b>Below 17</b>	<b>Total</b>
<i>Delivery of cooked meal, groceries and PPE</i>	892	917	269	2078
<i>Virtual Homework Club program</i>		24	30	54
<i>Back to school Backpack and Book Drive</i>			37	37
<i>Youth Education - Tips to Keep Your Mental Health in Check During and After COVID-19 Isolation</i>		186		186
<i>GCAO Financial Talk Series 1 – Budgeting for Success</i>		55		55
<i>GCAO Financial Talk Series 2 – Understanding how money works</i>		38		38
<i>GCAO Financial Talk Series 3 – ABCs of RESP</i>		25		25
<i>Stepping into Success</i>		70		70
<i>Let's Talk Healthy Relationship</i>		137		137
<i>Black Lives Matter Discussion</i>		35		35
<i>Virtual Business town hall meeting with Brampton Mayor</i>		60		60
<i>Exploring the intersection of Criminal Justice with Human Rights and Family law, through the lens of Black Lives</i>		67		67
<i>Senior Education and Engagements activities</i>	119			119
<i>Senior Crochet</i>	20			20
<i>Immigration Matters</i>		30		30
<i>Women Crushing Wednesday</i>		25		25
<i>Education on COVID-19 –Health and Wellness</i>	35	270		305
<i>Difficult Discussion in our homes – Domestic Violence and Abuse</i>		37		37
<i>Women on the Go – women empowering women</i>		67		67
<i>Weight management to prevent chronic illnesses during the Covid-19 pandemic.</i>		60		60
<i>Fruitful communities' seniors' health program</i>	70			70
<i>Breast Cancer Awareness seminar.</i>		69		69
<i>Mental Health management during Covid-19</i>		65		65
<i>Welfare and Compassionate Community Support</i>	50	10		60
<i>Health Team Community Education</i>		30		30
<i>Zumba Activity</i>		18		18
<i>Know your legal rights as an employee in Ontario</i>		39		39
<b><i>Total Number of people the project has reached:</i></b>	<b>1186</b>	<b>2334</b>	<b>336</b>	<b>3857</b>

# Grocery On Wheels



The Grocery on Wheel program was created to improve food security for families/households that were unable to obtain groceries, especially seniors and families in self-isolation who do not have access to food and currently not receiving support from other community food programs.

This program supported seniors (age 65 and older and people with underlying health conditions or weakened immune systems as well as low-income families. Recipients registered online to receive support. The following are the number of households served from August to October.



## Impact

- 2078** Individuals
- 574** unique Children and Youth served
- 892** seniors
- 90%** of recipients were from low income families who were currently not working.
- 23%** were students not working,
- 35%** of the recipients of food were unemployed

*As a store owner, partnering in this program gave me the opportunity to serve the community in need. It's a pleasure to help and educate the people who came to store, many whom*



*if not through this program, I would not have had the chance to meet – New Era*

*I was happy to receive foods that are specific to my culture. It was great to know someone cared to help even though it was once in a month support. - Food Recipient*

## Seniors Connect

Loneliness and social isolation continue to emerge as a local and national issue. With Ghanaian-Canadian seniors, it is much more complex as culture plays an impact. GCAO created these programs to reduce loneliness and isolation by engaging seniors to actively participate and run programs for themselves. The seniors met online and also connected on WhatsApp participating in activities such as:

- Trivia and Puzzle Activities
- Anansi Story
- Crochet Classes
- Health and wellness education programs

209

Participants



7

Engagement Projects

GHANAIAN-CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF ONTARIO

**Crochet Classes**  
FREE VIRTUAL PROGRAM

Starting on the 13th of October 2020  
Every Tuesday & Thursdays at 10:30am

Class and knitting kit is provided free of charge to you.  
Only 25 spaces available

Requirement: access to smart phone or a computer

**TO REGISTER, PLEASE CALL:**  
Felicia Botchway: 437-339-6775  
Kingsley Eyiah: 647-283-3865  
EMAIL: GCAOCANADA@GMAIL.COM

*As a senior who is retired and doesn't know too many Ghanaians in downtown Toronto, participating in the Seniors program was great. I was able to make new friends and everyday looked forward to connecting on Whatsapp or zoom for different activities.*

*- Senior from Senior Connect*



# Women's Wing of GCAO

The GCAO Women's wing involves both the young and old with the vision of supporting women across Ontario. They seek to enrich and nurture the young while bridging the gap between old through education and sharing of experiences. They focus to enhance and present opportunities for education and advocacy by empowering women, thereby strengthening families and transforming our community and beyond.

The following activities were held by the Women's Wing:

- Women Crushing Wednesday
- Difficult discussion in our homes – Domestic Violence and Abuse
- Women on the Go – Women empowering women
- Saturday Zumba



## **Difficult Discussion in our homes – Domestic Violence and Abuse:**

This workshop addressed issues in our community such as mental health, various relationships and financial health and counseling. The panelists came from the church community where the pastors as well as social workers and counselors are. 37 participants attended the zoom seminar.

**Women on the Go – women empowering women** – This was an event where women met **virtually** to discuss domestic issues, balancing career and home, life and power in giving back to the community on August 8, 2020. 67 participants attended the zoom seminar.

**Women Crushing Wednesdays** –25 Women meet each week to share ideas and have conversation over tea on self-care, parenting and other issues related to women. As a pilot project to help reduce stress among women in the community, they found this reunion to be supportive.

**Women Zumba** – Physical activity is found to help reduce stress as well as increase engagement. This program was organized to bring women together every Saturday morning to work out for an hour led by a fitness instructor.

# GCAO HomeWork Club



## Homework Club Activities

The academic improvement of the children in the community is vital to the growth of the community. As a result, GCAO restructured the Homework club to provide services virtually, serving children from ages 5-17 who needed extra support at home. The program offered various activities such as career planning, life skills, budgeting, money management, arts and other recreation. The goal was to inform and help prepare the students for post-secondary. The program also conducts mental health check in with the students to allow for discussion and engagement of students.

Below are the achievements:

- Reconnected students virtually with their peers and their teachers/mentors.
- Conducted weekly check-in, discussed students’ anxieties, excitement and concerns for upcoming school year with focused on their well-being and ability to cope with pandemic.
- Identified gaps in students’ learning due to disruptions during 2019-2020 year.
- Provided weekly cultural instruction and practiced Twi language.
- Provided students with practical tips for coping with concerns, practicing good hygiene and social distancing, dealing with uncooperative peers and staying safe.

**91**  
Participants

**104**  
Hours

Activity	# of Attendees
<b>Virtual Homework Club program</b>	54
<b>Back to school Backpack and Book Drive</b>	37

## Health Education/Awareness

The rising number of health conditions among the Ghanaian community continues to increase due to various factors associated with lifestyle and awareness. The Health Education team offered various educations and strategies to increase the lifespan among the community members as well as connecting various people to resources and support programs in the community. This program is led by Ghanaian health professionals in Ontario as well as partners with existing healthcare services who specialize in healthcare among Ghanaians.

**720**  
Participants

**7**  
Total Activities

Activity	# of Attendees
Tips to Keep Your Mental Health in Check During and After COVID-19 Isolation	186
Health Education on COVID-19 –Virtual Town hall –Health and Wellness	305
Fruitful communities’ seniors’ health program week.	70
Breast Cancer Awareness seminar.	69
Mental Health management during Covid-19 Pandemic	65
Health Team Community Education	30

### **Tips to Keep Your Mental Health in Check During and After COVID-19 Isolation**

The Isolation and social distancing due to the pandemic we believe would have an impact on many young people. Unable to work, socialize and even go to work in these crazy times can give people anxiety. As a result, this workshop was organized with the goal of initiating the awareness of mental health and to share with the community on strategies to improve their mental wellbeing as well as increase their understanding on factors associated with mental health, impact, prevention and management of mental health challenges. Over 186 participants attended this event on zoom as well as the Facebook live.

### **Fruitful communities’ seniors’ health program week.**

Health education was provided to seniors in the communities through zoom regarding seniors’ health and how to preserve holistic health during covid-19 pandemic to prevent complications associated with chronic illness and management and how to improve mental health and wellness, tips of positive mental health strategies. 70 seniors participated in the conversation.

### **Breast Cancer Awareness seminar.**

Knowing the signs and symptoms surrounding breast cancer is very important as it can as early detection, often through screening, can catch the disease when it is most treatable. 69 people attended the zoom event and over 200 viewed on Facebook. The event started with cancer survivors lived experience, then followed by professional experts who shared on:



- What is breasts cancer, signs and symptoms and management medication, medications for treatment
- Discussed the prevalence, diagnostic process, and treatment and mortality rate of breast cancer in Ghana compare to the Canadian data
- Provided resources that are available to community members who do not have access to health care due to being non-status or being a victor to the Canada
- I.E. the GTA clinic for visitors and people without status

### **Mental Health management during Covid-19 Pandemic**

Mental health management is a conversation the community continues to provide. This seminar focused on providing resources and strategies to inform families and communities as well as education to reduce the stigma associated with mental health in the Ghanaian community. Presenters shared information about signs and symptoms of mental health such as anxiety, depression and seasonal affective disorder to allow community members to be aware of how mental health impacts physical health and when to seek medical help. 65 people participated in this seminar. Multiple feedback were share by participants who attended the seminar and how useful and impactful the information is to them and requested the recorded seminar to be posted on GCAO website for other members of the community in western Canada to have access i.e. Calgary Alberta

### **Health Team Community Education**

Provided education to a group of young men and women on diabetes management, symptomology and how to prevent complications such as kidney diseases. Feedback post group education indicated the positive impact it has on their lives and the importance of informing others of the new learn health promotion education to prevent diseases. 30 people attended this online education.

### **Health and Wellness Town Hall**

The impact of COVID-19 was so devastating to the world that our community was gripped with fear, just as any other community and across the world. To ensure our community had the information they needed to protect themselves, we organized a Virtual Town Hall with two community Doctors. The event had audiences tune in throughout the country and also people joined on Facebook. The event was lively as questions and answers helped our community to reinforce the message that physical and social distance and the basic preventative measures to keep our community safe. 305 participants attended this event.

# GCAO Non-Health Programs

GCAO through grants created various support programs related to education, health, legal, financial and social. Through collaboration with other organizations, we were able to connect community members to resources, services, programs and support during the COVID-19 Pandemic. The purpose was to improve health outcomes while focusing on non-health factors such as housing, unemployment and poverty, criminalization, etc. The following programs were held to increase awareness and community empowerment to increase community engagement as well as Digital Literacy , Financial literacy, Employment Strategies, Entrepreneurship, Self-Development and Self-Empowerment and Criminal Justice.

**374**  
Participants

**8**  
Total Activities

Activity	# of Attendees
GCAO Financial Talk Series 1 – Budgeting for Success	55
GCAO Financial Talk Series 2 – Understanding how money works	38
GCAO Financial Talk Series 3 – ABCs of RESP	25
Virtual Business town hall meeting with Brampton Mayor	60
Exploring the intersection of Criminal Justice with Human Rights and Family law, through the lens of Black Lives	67
Immigration Matters	30
Know your legal rights as an employee in Ontario	39
Health Team Community Education	60

## Know your legal right as an employee in Ontario

Employment lawyer was invited to share with the community on how to safely protect ourselves in the workplace with COVID at hand. Understanding our rights and obligations as an employee under the employment standards act and other legislation will help us make the decisions to protect ourselves in the workplace.

## Welfare and Compassionate Community Support

Death and dying is a difficult conversation, along with bereavement during COVID, the missing of family members or family in distress due to legal, health, personal and other challenges. The welfare and compassionate support program is designed to triage requests from the community and provide holistic support. Since the implementation of the program, the team has provided holistic support to 52 people experiencing serious illness, caregiving, dying and grieving. Some of the support includes delivering food to extremely vulnerable seniors, families in isolation due to COVID,



supporting families who lost everything in an apartment fire, a student who was shot and hospitalized, families with immigration, families unable to work due to injury, families in the shelter, etc. They provided other support to community members who passed from brain tumors, a family who lost loved ones and left behind children, male found deceased in a hotel. Some of the support included sending flowers to families, helping identify the deceased person, identifying lawyers or social workers to help provide legal counsel, financially supporting families in need of basic house needs.

### **GCAO Financial Talk Series 1 – Budgeting for Success**

This pandemic has made it challenging for many families to understand how to work with their finances. This workshop focused on the basics to budgeting to help families learn how to save for their future regardless of the small funds they currently have. 55 participants joined the GCAO Financial Talk Series on zoom while Facebook had over 530 views to learn about Budgeting for success. The session was impactful as many who attended had questions and made recommendations to schedule future talks a little longer, and dedicated time for answering questions. Overall, everyone enjoyed the talk and looked forward to the series.

### **GCAO Financial Talk Series 2 -Understanding how money works**

We all have financial responsibilities. The major ones are retirement because we will all retire, we all need a home, and we need funds for education. If you plan well, you will build wealth. Planning is very important. 38 people participated in the talk series and asked questions related to how they can save to support themselves for the future. People enjoyed the talk as they were able to follow along. They found insightful information. The speaker used great examples to inform the audience about the different funds.

### **GCAO Financial Talk Series 3 – ABCs of RESP**

Education costs a lot and how are we planning for them? This session was organized to help educate the community on saving for the future, especially for their children. 25 parents attended the session. It was very informative as many participants contacted their financial advisors to open RESP.

### **Exploring the intersection of Criminal Justice with Human Rights and Family law, through the lens of Black Lives**

Virtual seminar to discuss tips on navigating the criminal justice system as well as discussion on anti-black racism and where the justice system is in supporting families. 67 Participants attended the zoom seminar.

### **Virtual Business town hall meeting with Brampton Mayor**

Virtual seminar with government office to discuss possible options for small businesses with regards to the shutdown. What support systems exist and how they can apply for the support from the government as well as recovery after the pandemic. It was well attended by the tax, truck and shipping businesses. The mayor's office was pleased to work with the team and the participants were glad to participate as many left with information on how to get support for their businesses.

## Acknowledgement

<b>Grant Management and Planning Team</b> <i>Ben Okyere</i> <i>Dr. Victor Awafo</i> <i>Gabriel Odartei</i> <i>Larry Kutuadu</i> <i>Mary Akuamoah-Boateng</i> <i>Mr. Emmanuel Duodu</i> <i>Nana Kay Nti</i> <i>Natasha Boakye</i>	<b>Grocery Leaders</b> <i>Dr. Sagoe</i> <i>Eddie Ameh</i> <i>Felicia Botchway</i> <i>Mary Akuamoah-Boateng</i> <i>Mr. Fabian Frimpong</i> <i>Nana Kay Nti</i> <i>Obaa Yaa Agyeman</i> <i>Philip Mawuenyr</i>	<b>Homework Club</b> <i>Mavis Tekpeki</i> <i>Mr. Kingsley Eyiah</i> <i>Obaa Yaa Agyeman</i> <i>Ophelia Barnes</i> <i>Priscilla Hinnewaah</i> <i>Shani Ocquaye</i> <i>Vivian Ofori</i>	<b>Health Education Team</b> <i>Abigail</i> <i>Ann Ofori-Ata</i> <i>Augusta Sarkodie</i> <i>Grace Arku</i> <i>Juliet Opoku</i> <i>Vivian Ofori</i>
<b>GCHC Steering Committee</b> <i>Albert Aikins</i> <i>Dr. Victor Awafo</i> <i>Emmanuel Quaye</i> <i>Father K</i> <i>Gabriel Odartei</i> <i>Larry Kutuadu</i> <i>Mary Akuamoah-Boateng</i> <i>Maud Tutu</i> <i>Nathaniel Boateng</i> <i>Nii Odoi Yemoh</i> <i>Rev. Eric Amoah</i> <i>Rev. Isaac DeGraft</i>  <b>Welfare and Compassionate</b> <i>Felicia Oppong Botchway</i> <i>Munira Mahama</i> <i>Naomi Apenteng</i> <i>Obaa Yaa Agyeman</i>  <b>Legal Education Team</b> <i>Janet Brakohiapa</i>  <b>Senior Engagement</b> <i>Felicia Botchway</i>	<b>Young Adult Wing</b> <i>Amma Gyamfoa</i> <i>Bernard Laryea</i> <i>Gabriel Odartei</i> <i>Mary Akuamoah-Boateng</i> <i>Nana Kay Nti</i> <i>Natasha Boakye</i> <i>Nathaniel Boateng</i> <i>Richard Twumasi</i> <i>Shani Ocquaye</i>  <b>Communication/Technology</b> <i>Mr. Brako</i> <i>Emmanuel Odoi</i> <i>Emmanuel Atuahene</i>  <b>Women's Wing</b> <i>Rita Duah</i> <i>Vivian Ofori</i> <i>Anna Addo</i> <i>Priscilla Hinnewaah</i>	<b>Youth Wing</b> <i>Amma Gyamfoa</i> <i>Brittney Owusu-Tawiah</i> <i>Charlene Mensah</i> <i>Ezekiel Agyeman</i> <i>Jessica Brittney</i> <i>Justina Ackah</i> <i>Kwaku Oteng</i> <i>Kwasi Adu-Poku</i> <i>Mary Adarkwa</i> <i>Mary Akuamoah-Boateng</i> <i>Nanayaa Opoku-Ware</i> <i>Neviah Arthur</i> <i>Nina Aning</i> <i>Sara Duodu</i> <i>Tamara Twumwah-Ofori</i> <i>Tess Frempong</i> <i>Valerie Osei</i> <i>Victor Danquah</i> <i>Zakiya Abdullahi</i>	<b>Youth Council Advisory</b> <i>Amma Gyamfoa</i> <i>Bernard Laryea</i> <i>Don Yirenkyi</i> <i>Dr. Victor Awafo</i> <i>Emmanuel Duodu</i> <i>Gabriel Odartei</i> <i>Gordon Cudjoe</i> <i>Mary Akuamoah-Boateng</i> <i>Mr. Eyiah</i> <i>Rev. Dr. Obie Agyeman</i> <i>Shani Ocquaye</i> <i>Vivian Ofori</i> <i>Yaw Ofori Dompreeh</i>  <b>Ghana Union Peace Council</b> <i>Nana Osei Achampong</i> <i>Mr. Arhinful</i> <i>Apostle Anokye Manu</i> <i>Nana Kwakooa</i> <i>Nana Yaa Owusuaa</i> <i>Nana Oparebea Adinkra</i>
<b>Grocery Stores</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Adabraham Supermarket, Scarborough</li> <li>- Adepa African Grocery, Etobicoke</li> <li>- African Queen Caribbean Groceries, Brampton</li> <li>- AFROCAN Supermarket, North York</li> <li>- Atwima Marfo Enterprise, Scarborough</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Bantama Supermarket, Etobicoke</li> <li>- Caribbean Tropical Grocery, Brampton</li> <li>- Caribbean Tropical Grocery, Burlington</li> <li>- Eddie Ameh The Yam Seller, Waterloo</li> <li>- G Central Market, Etobicoke</li> <li>- Hannah's Supermarket Inc, Ajax</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- KAF African Caribbean Market, Oakville</li> <li>- Kaneshi Market, Etobicoke</li> <li>- Kumasi Home Market, North York</li> <li>- Liberty African Supermarket, Concord</li> <li>- Makola Tropical Foods, Etobicoke</li> <li>- New African King Meat Shop, North York</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- New Asafo Market, North York</li> <li>- New Era, Etobicoke</li> <li>- New Kajetia Market Inc., North York</li> <li>- New Kantamanto Market Inc, North York</li> <li>- Rowntree Meat, Etobicoke</li> <li>- XPRESS Tropical Foods, North York and Etobicoke</li> </ul>

Thank you to the Amazing Team who helped us accomplish our goals for the year 2020 and everyone whose name might not be listed.