



TALKING DRUMS

SPRING 2021 NEWSLETTER



Ghanaian-Canadian Association of Ontario (GCAO)



10 BELFIELD ROAD, ETOBICOKE, ONTARIO, M9W 1G1

E-MAIL: INFO@GCAOCANADA.ORG • WWW.GCAOCANADA.ORG



GCAO COVID-19 Vaccine Mobile Clinics

The GCAO in partnership with the City of Toronto Public Health has been working together to engage the public on vaccine education, awareness and outreach. COVID-19 has caused great devastation in our lives, helping our community navigate this deadly pandemic is one of GCAO's top priorities to help dispel myths and misinformation about vaccination and treatments. Our strong community faith during this pandemic has helped us find ways to alleviate suffering and pain and we hope with continued partnership, we can support all Ghanaian- Canadians in Ontario.

Here are some of our most recent vaccination events:

- April 30, 2021: Vaccination Clinic at Continuation Hall – 720 people vaccinated
- May 5, 2021: Vaccination Clinic at Continuation Hall – 886 people vaccinated
- May 11, 2021: Vaccination Clinic at Chalk Farm - 724 people vaccinated
- May 12, 2021: Vaccination Clinic at Chalk Farm - 661 people vaccinated
- June 12: Vaccination Clinic at Continuation Church - 1021 people were vaccinated



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- COVID Vaccine Mobile Clinics
- GCAO President's Message
- Vaccine Myths
- Grocery On Wheels Program
- Seniors Group Updates
- Welfare / Women's Group Updates
- GCAO Program Information
- Homework Club Updates
- Upcoming 2021 Events

WHO WE ARE

The Ghanaian-Canadian Association of Ontario is a non-profit umbrella organization for all Ghanaian-Canadian individuals, faith-groups, professional and social organizations in Ontario established to promote and improve the well-being of its members.

MISSION STATEMENT

To provide social, cultural and educational programs to Ghanaian-Canadians in Ontario to enhance the living standards of members.

VISION STATEMENT

A strong, inclusive, vibrant and sustainable community that provides support services to enhance the well-being of Ghanaian- Canadians in Ontario.

Message from the President



“What counts in life is not the mere fact that we have lived; it is what difference we have made to the lives of others that will determine the significance of the life we lead” by Nelson Mandela

This quote aptly exemplifies the different age groups in our community volunteering to deliver groceries to the needy, visiting the sick, reaching out to those who are lonely, providing resources to seniors, coordinating seminars for seniors, women and youth, resourcing our business community, educating our community about COVID-19, bringing to our door how the law works, and general welfare delivery needs of our community. Our community has come together in an unprecedented manner in responding and adapting to the needs of the community. The teeming volunteers, leaders of all stripes have rolled up their sleeves and have offered service without even being noticed and in an unassuming manner. You are the best of the best of our community. You have persevered even with the risk of COVID in delivering food at the doorsteps of seniors and volunteered at pop-up clinics to alleviate the plight of community members.

GCAO has aptly engaged health professionals in our community who have provided well attended information and education sessions on the importance of vaccination and to dispel some myths around vaccine hesitancy.

On behalf of our community and on my own behalf, I want to express my gratitude to you, our leadership core and volunteers for a job well done. Words do not come close to articulating what you have done for this community. What you have demonstrated during this pandemic signifies that our community is in good hands, and we can rise to any occasion and adversity to rally our community for the common good.

True leadership is not what we say or espouse, but what we do and who we serve. When we are in the service of our fellow man we are essentially in the service of God. I am looking forward to social and physical distancing ease when we come together in person to cheer each other up and share what we have accomplished together. You are the future and face of this community. COVID-19 is not over yet but things are looking up and with vaccination and herd immunity evolving, we will see in person soon. Please continue to do what health experts want us to do, be safe and healthy.

Keep up the good work. God Bless!

Mr. Emmanuel Duodu.
President of GCAO

GCAO Receives COVID-19 Vaccine Engagement Teams Grant To Recruit Ambassadors For Vaccination Engagement

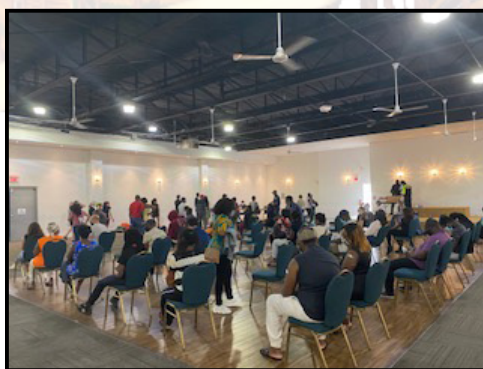
The GCAO in collaboration with other community organizations successfully submitted a collaborative application for the COVID-19 Vaccine Engagement Teams Grant. Through these funds, the GCAO is working closely with the community organizations and the City of Toronto to ensure all Ghanaian-Canadians in Ontario are educated and are engaged in the COVID-19 vaccination roll-out. In ensuring we reach every corner of Toronto, 10 youth ambassadors were hired to work closely with the City of Toronto and the partnering organizations.



Vaccine Myths

As a community, we are not just fighting a pandemic, but also an infodemic. Ever since the pandemic began, misinformation and subsequent lack of trust in healthcare professionals has increased. However, claims of vaccines causing infertility, mutations, autism and a myriad of other health conditions have been proven false and are not based on scientific research. In fact, widespread vaccination has helped significantly decrease or virtually eliminate many diseases throughout the world. These vaccines have become so effective that we sometimes fail to appreciate how important they have been in promoting continued public health. Due to the continued vaccination of people globally, we no longer worry about potentially fatal diseases like smallpox, polio, whooping cough, measles, hepatitis and the flu. Through vaccinations, many nations have significantly reduced the number of severe COVID-19 cases and life is gradually returning to normal. It's easier to prevent the virus rather than treat it, so we should aim to protect ourselves and our loved ones through vaccination.

Written By: Dan Amankona Jr.



Improving Older Adults Lives And Addressing Social Isolation

Social isolation and its effects continue to emerge as a local and national issue. In regards to Ghanaian-Canadian seniors, it is much more complex, as culture plays a significant role and is largely impactful to our wellbeing. As a result, our Seniors Program has been tasked with developing new ways to address their needs. The Seniors Program consistently distributed PPE to our community, and in partnership with the Etobicoke Food Distribution Program provided food to the elderly and financially vulnerable families for the past few months. This March the Seniors Program was awarded The New Horizon Grant to connect Ghanaian-Canadian seniors in the GTA and help reduce isolation by engaging and encouraging them to actively participate and run programs for themselves. This grassroots approach is intimate and effective, as our seniors design programs that address specific needs that only they would know.

Such programs include

- Senior Digital Literacy
- Exercise and Wellness Programs
- Social Meetups
- Seniors awareness & Education programs
- Gardening Classes
- Advice and mentoring Sessions
- Crochet and Knitting Classes



The fundamental principle of the Seniors Program is the belief that old age does not exempt you from contribution. In fact, we all require the knowledge and wisdom of our seniors to ensure a more prosperous future for the next generation. After all, as the old Ashanti saying goes “A senior who is sitting down can see further than a young person who is standing.” The Seniors Program is encouraging all of our elderly to get involved and be active members of our community.

The Seniors Program would like to express their appreciation to the GCAO leadership, in particular the Health and Wellness Group for distributing desperately needed blood pressure monitors and glucose strips. They also appreciate the GCAO’s commitment to providing electronic devices to further enhance our Senior’s Digital Literacy Program. They also encourage the young to get involved, particularly in their gardening activities.

Ghanaian-Canadian seniors are welcome to contact:

Mrs. Felicia Botchway, Seniors Program Coordinator at 437-339-6775 to participate in the Seniors Program.



Navigating the New Normal – Compassionate Support

While the Welfare and Compassion Group is rarely seen, its impact is profound and felt by all. It is a group that is inherently fluid in its operation and addresses specific needs in collaboration with the various institutional wings of the GCAO.

Due to cultural myths and certain stigmas surrounding wellbeing, many problems are never considered and are subsequently left unattended. The Welfare and Compassion Group sought to rectify these issues by creating support program to provide nuanced online and phone services that focus on counselling. Issues including pandemic coping, grief, abuse, caregiving stress, isolation, and a myriad of other topics have been addressed by the experts in this program. Over the past few months, the Welfare and Compassion Group has been engrossed with supporting community members who have been challenged by homelessness, death, missing persons, mental health challenges, abuse, and those in need of advocacy. They often function as a triage unit in collaboration with the GCAO Health and Wellness Wing, and refer patients to the appropriate professionals when needed.

While the GCAO is committed to addressing the specific needs of the community, there are some extreme instances of Ghanaian-Canadians in desperate need of assistance and care. One such instance was the tragic passing of a mother who left behind her husband and young children. The Welfare and Compassion Group assisted this family in their time of need by integrating the children into the GCAO Homework Club. Involving the children in the homework club allowed them to socialize with other children and also allowed the team to observe and assist in any trauma related to the tragedy. The Welfare and Compassion Group also provided caregiving options and suggested immigration lawyers to assist the family in moving relatives here to help support the family.

Last month, a terminally ill elderly Ghanaian-Canadian gentleman expressed the desire to die among his loved ones in Ghana. The Welfare and Compassion Group humbly asked the greater Ghanaian-Canadian community for whatever assistance they could provide and were honoured by over \$6000 worth of donations. The gentleman is now spending his last days peacefully with loved ones in Ghana.

The Welfare and Compassion Group would like to thank their passionate and hardworking volunteers, the Ghanaian-Canadian community, and all partners that have assisted in their work. They look forward to helping the most at-risk and disadvantaged in our community.

If interested in volunteering for the Welfare and Compassion Group, please contact Co-Chair Munira Mahama at 647- 771-1929



GCAO Receives Funds From City of Toronto

Hunger among the vulnerable in our community was already a challenge before the COVID-19 pandemic. The impact of COVID-19 has dramatically increased food insecurity for many Ghanaian-Canadians living in the City of Toronto. This year, with the support from the City of Toronto, 937 households received groceries. 15 Ghanaian-Canadian grocery stores were selected to participate in the grocery program. The program supported seniors and low income families who do not have access to food and are currently not receiving support from other government food programs.



Funds were also used to support the following areas:

- After school programs and mentorship
- Seniors and youth engagement to reduce social isolation
- Community education and social intervention activities including health and wellness.
- Chronic health and mental health tool kits, social justice and other community issues.
- PPE to seniors and the vulnerable

In regards to the Food Program, the GCAO had the privilege of partnering with North Etobicoke Cluster Agencies (Rexdale Community Center) to serve hot meals to seniors and vulnerable members of our community in the North Etobicoke cluster. The Health and Wellness Wing used the infrastructure of the grocery delivery program to distribute not only PPE but also educational resources. They also relied on the strength of our community, associations, faith-based groups and youth to spread awareness.

WOMEN'S WING UPDATES

Since January 2020, the Women's Wing of the GCAO launched a program called Women Crush Wednesdays. Its purpose is to provide a safe space where Ghanaian-Canadian women feel comfortable discussing intimate topics that impact their lives. Each session focuses on different issues and emphasizes education and the sharing of experiences, wisdom, transformational journeys, and strength. Women Crush Wednesday is a sister circle program that gives every member an opportunity to educate the women on a topic significant to their experience.

Here are some activities from the program:

January

Women Crush Wednesdays held a virtual workshop in collaboration with IAmAFitMom and Serendipity Luxe Projects to emphasize the importance of physical activity and self-care.

February

They held a Black Women Making History Conference and had the pleasure of being joined by numerous Ghanaian-Canadian women who achieved exceptional success in business, law, medicine, and entrepreneurship. This event was informative and well-received, with over 50 virtual attendees.

March

They launched the GCAO Women's Support Group and collaborated with the Sister2sister Organization to host the Women Talking Trauma event. This event provided a safe place for women to discuss their trauma and learn to develop strategies to help cope with their experiences. These stories of survival and perseverance not only helped heal but also established a network for women to deal with their trauma going forward.

April

They held a conference called Women on the Move. This meeting emphasized the importance of healthy living, discussing health trends, and the importance of investing in the health of women and their families.

May

They held a Mother's Day Conference in celebration of both mothers and women in the Ghanaian-Canadian community. While the pandemic has kept many away from their families, the love for our mothers was felt all the same.

The Women's Wing is currently planning a program called Closing the Gap. This program will address the generational differences between Ghanaian-Canadian women and their daughters, and provide a safe space where both parties can voice their grievances and interpretations of a woman's role in a rapidly changing society.

If interested in the Ghanaian-Canadian Women's Wing, you are welcome to contact

Ms. Vivian Ofori, Co-coordinator of the GCAO Women's Wing at 705-794-8185 to participate in the group's various activities.

Homework Club Updates

Since its inception, the Homework Club has routinely held sessions every Sunday at 3 pm. They begin each session with Twi classes taught by Ms. Mavis Tekpeki. Ghanaian-Canadian children, adults, and even non- Ghanaian-Canadians attend to learn the language. The Homework Club is requesting that those in the community who are fluent in other Ghanaian-Canadian dialects, particularly Ga, Ewe and Hausa, reach out and volunteer for similar sessions.

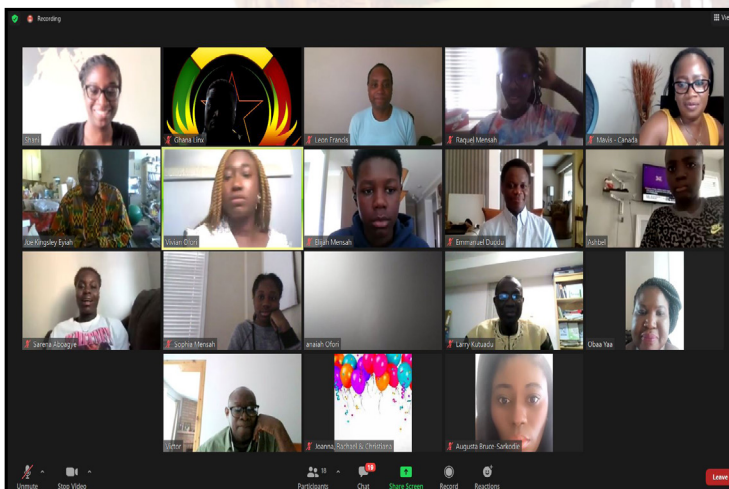
After the language sessions, the focus is shifted to mathematics, where many of the students have expressed the most difficulty. This portion of the program is handled by Shani Ocquaye-Prempeh and the Head of the Homework Club, Mr. Joe Kingsley Eyiah.

Our students also participated in the International Day of the African Child, organized by the Giants of Africa Foundation and sponsored by the Toronto Raptors. In fact, one of our students won an award for their outstanding work in this program. The Homework Club also participates annually in the Toronto Ad Council's Modern Batik Couture Program. In this program, our students produce art on textile and auction them to the community to help with organizational fundraising.

The Homework Club recently created a new group dedicated exclusively to young adults called 'The Field Legends Group'. The group acts as a transitional program between high school and university/college. This largely entails social education, confidence building, resume help, life skills, and networking. Due to the pandemic and virtual learning, many senior high school students were unable to access guidance counsellors and other student amenities that would typically facilitate their successful transition to post-secondary education. To address these needs, the group collaborated with Humber College to provide virtual seminars on university and college applications and academic planning. The Homework Club, Young Field Legends, and the GCAO humbly thank Humber College for their assistance in developing our future leaders.

This summer the Heads of The Field Legends Group, Vivian Ofori and Ophelia Barnes polled the students and determined that time management and financial education were the major skills that they were looking to improve. The group serves the youth even further by focusing on where they are in life and addressing needs specific to each student.

The GCAO Homework Group and The Field Legends would like to thank all students for participating, and express their deepest gratitude to Joyce Acheampong, Sandra Ofori, Victor Adarquah and all of our passionate volunteers.



If you are interested in volunteering for The Homework Group please contact our Chair Mr. Joe Kingsley Eyiah at 647-283-3865

June Men's Health Month – Prostate Cancer: The Silent Killer

As men, we often reminisce on the glory days of our youth, rather than ensuring our health for the future. The unfortunate reality is that women routinely outlive men by an average of six years. While this difference is partly biological, men are more likely than women to abuse drugs and alcohol and generally neglect their health. With that said, annual physicals, a healthy lifestyle, and routine checkups are recommended for all adults over the age of 50. Yet how many of us men actually do? We've all heard tragic stories of seemingly robust men complaining briefly of sharp pain or a headache and suddenly dying. Many of these cases could have been prevented; however, many fatal diseases are silent killers that don't show symptoms until far too late. One such deadly and treatable disease is prostate cancer.

According to the Canadian Cancer Society, approximately 1 in 9 men will develop prostate cancer in Canada. It is the third leading cause of men's cancer death in Canada (accounting for 10%), yet it remains one of the more treatable of all types of cancer. Increased attention should be paid to this disease by us in particular, since African and Caribbean men are at an increased risk of developing the disease compared to other races. This is likely due to a variety of reasons, but researchers have not been able to determine definitive causation. Nevertheless, some things can be done to reduce our chances of developing this disease.

First, increasing our knowledge and spreading awareness of the disease is vital to decreasing our chances of developing the disease. Secondly, we should talk to our healthcare providers about receiving a PSA test. This test is the primary screening test used to determine the existence of prostate cancer or the likelihood of it developing. Further, we need to normalize talking about our health, especially prostate cancer. We tend to believe that seeking medical attention is a sign of weakness; however, the opposite is the case. Spreading awareness among ourselves allows us to prolong our lives and do the truly strong thing -be there for our families. Finally, leading an active and healthy lifestyle is paramount to prolonged health. Men are encouraged to exercise and avoid drug and alcohol abuse. Research has shown that low-fibre and high-fat diets increase the likelihood of the disease developing,

so we should refrain from eating very fatty cuts of meat. Diets comprised of fish, berries, cruciferous vegetables (cabbage, cauliflower, brussels sprouts, bok choy, broccoli) and cooked tomatoes are all abundant in antioxidants, vitamins, minerals, and phytochemicals -which all help combat and potentially prevent prostate cancer.

While the fear of being diagnosed with cancer is a very common and understandable feeling, we must realize that early detection greatly increases our chances of survival. Another common fear is treatment leading to sexual dysfunction, however, the majority of men diagnosed with prostate cancer won't need treatment because the cancer is very slow-growing and does not cause symptoms. Failure to get screened, however, may result in the disease developing and potentially spreading to other parts of the body, namely the genitals, so the most efficient way to protect our manhood is routine checkups and PSA tests.

Prostate health is too often neglected due to a lack of information, general health neglect, viewing medical attention as a sign of weakness, and notions that potential problems with your genital area reflect a lack of manhood. The reality, however, is that the true lack of manhood is neglecting to preserve our health and dying prematurely. We leave our wives, children and grandchildren and deprive them of years of love, dedication, and wisdom. As men emerging from a global pandemic, we should dedicate ourselves to preserving our health by getting routine checkups, annual PSA tests, and maintaining a healthy lifestyle and diet. Besides, don't our loved ones deserve it?

Written By: Dan Amankona Jr.

Program At A Glance

GCAO offers supportive services and programs for the Ghanaian community within the GTA and beyond. Services include settlements/welfare related issues, newcomer, homework/after-school programs, seniors and women's programs.

We also provide support in the following areas: Translation/interpretation services and help with preparing government and other official applications. Our team is fluent in various Ghanaian languages including Twi, Fante, Ga, Hausa, Ewe, Dangbe. Information/referral services, including supportive, advocacy services /guardians.

Homework/After-School Programs

The Homework Club, one of GCAO's first programs, is an after-school program that is designed to provide elementary to high school students (aged 6 years to 18 years) support in completing their homework as well as developing other skills. The program is run by registered teachers, as well as retired teachers and community members who have experience working with children and youth.

For more information, contact education@gcaocanada.org

Youth/Young Adult Group

GCAO's Youth Wing oversees the initiatives for both the youth and young adult generations. Our mission is to elevate, cultivate, and inspire the strengths and collaborative efforts of the young generation, encouraging them to take charge as positive change agents, while leaving an impactful and lasting footprint in local communities.

For more information, contact youngadults@gcaocanada.org

Seniors Programs

The "Golden Agers" Seniors Group, was created to give the seniors in our community a space to learn and laugh, but also share knowledge and experiences with others. Our goal is to enable our aging population to remain vital, healthy, and connected to their community. We seek to enhance the lives of all seniors who need assistance to live safely and independently in their own homes.

If interested, contact seniors@gcaocanada.org or 647-202-2594.

Women Programs & Services

The Women's Wing is aimed at supporting Ghanaian women of all ages, working together to eradicate poverty, violence, lack of self-confidence, and foster creativity, cultural heritage, and leadership among women. The Women's Wing is committed to empowering women, thereby strengthening families and transforming our community and beyond.

For more information, contact women@gcaocanada.org

Health & Wellness

The Health Education Team offers a wide range of education and strategies to increase the lifespan among the community, as well as connecting various people to resources and support programs. This program is led by Ghanaian health professionals as well as partnerships with existing healthcare services that specialize in healthcare among Ghanaians

If interested, contact health@gcaocanada.org or 647-202-2594

Welfare and Compassionate Group

Our mission is to listen, empathize, assess, and triage our members to the appropriate services, doing so in a culturally-sensitive and non-judgmental manner. We aim to serve as instruments of solace and relief to the Ghanaian community.

For more information and resources, contact info@gcaocanada.org

GCAO Youth Advisory and Action Council (GAYAC)

The purpose of this council is to develop strategies in partnership with Ghanaian youth and their families, to assist youth in need of support, and to advise the GCAO executives on current youth issues in the community. It's core values and principles are predicated on the belief that Ghanaian youth (aged 13 to 29) are best served when they are surrounded by positive peer influences and able to develop strong, stable and positive relationships with adult role models.

If interested, contact Mr Duodu: president@gcaocanada.org

Ghanaian-Canadian Chamber of Commerce

The mission of the Ghanaian Canadian Chamber of Commerce is to assemble and create a platform of Ghanaian professionals and business entrepreneurs across Canada, to collectively engage and address business and other public issues, that results in opportunities for success. The Chamber of Commerce plays an integral role in the economic growth and development in Ghana and Canada.

If interested, contact Mr Odoi Yemoh: gccc@gcaocanada.org | website: canadagcc.ca

Diaspora Engagement Think Tank

An anchor of GCAO that promotes critical analysis of policies and community challenges, advocating to support Ghanaian Canadians to meet the growing needs of different population demographics, residing in Canada or wishing to return to Ghana.

If interested in joining, contact Dr. Victor Awafo: info@gcaocanada.org

JOIN US ONLINE

2021 UPCOMING SUMMER EVENTS

- COMMUNITY BBQ (TBD)
- YOUTH SUMMIT (AUGUST)





WELCOME TO THE
GCAO HEALTH HOTLINE

Do you need to talk to someone in a safe and confidential environment?

Do you have any health related questions?


We are doctors, social workers, nutritionists, dieticians, nurses, pharmacists and other health care professionals ready to help you

Please call 647-370-7711

Someone will reach out to you on:
Tuesdays: 9:00am - 2:00pm
Saturdays: 12:00pm - 4:00pm

"Take control of your health for health is wealth"

gcaocanada.org | health@gcaocanada.org

GHANAIAN-CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF ONTARIO

JOIN OUR VIRTUAL HOMEWORK CLUB

Activities include motivational talk, Mental math dealing with basic concepts in math, Cultural and Language Instruction (Twi), Fun Activities (online physical activities)


All students from Kindergarten to Grade 12 are welcome

EVERY SUNDAY
3:00 PM - 5:00 PM

To register, call any of the numbers below

647-283-3865 | 647-456-6675
416-316-0244 | 705-794-8154

WWW.GCAOCANADA.ORG
[@gcaocanada](https://www.instagram.com/gcaocanada) | [f](https://www.facebook.com/gcaocanada)
gcaocanada@gmail.com



This Spring 2021 Edition of this newsletter is published by Ghanaian-Canadian Association of Ontario (GCAO).

Comments, articles & suggestions should be directed to the editors.

10 Belfield Road. Etobicoke. ON. M9W 1G1
Tel: 647-895-5073 | Email: info@gcaocanada.org
Website: www.gcaocanada.org

Thank you to our Donors and Funders



Network for the Advancement of Black Communities



Réseau pour l'avancement des communautés noires

YORK UNIVERSITY




United Way Greater Toronto



Ghanaian-Canadian Association of Ontario

GHANAIAN LANGUAGE CLASSES ONLINE

WE ARE LOOKING FOR INSTRUCTORS OR TEACHERS FOR THE FOLLOWING GHANAIAN LANGUAGES:
TWI - GA - EWE - HAUSA

Weekly classes for both parents and children
EVERY SUNDAYS: 3 - 4 PM

FOR MORE INFORMATION
647-283-3865 | 416-316-0244

gcaocanada@gmail.com | [f](https://www.facebook.com/gcaocanada) | [@Gcaocanada](https://www.instagram.com/gcaocanada)




Women Crushing Wednesday /Therapeutic sessions.
(GCAO Women Support Group)

The therapeutic sessions cover topic areas from self-care to parenting and women's health. The women crush Wednesday is a sister circle type of program that focuses on creating a safe environment for Ghanaian women to gather on a biweekly basis to share experiences, wisdom, transformational journeys, strength, and offer support. Every woman within the group gets the opportunity to educate the women on a topic chosen to be applied to their daily living activities.

Requirements: Be of support, participate & recommend services, if applicable.

If this interests you please contact us at the following

GCAOCANADA.ORG
[@GCAOCANADA](https://www.instagram.com/gcaocanada)
[GCAOCANADA@GMAIL.COM](mailto:gcaocanada@gmail.com)