



Supporting African Grandmothers
and Orphans Through the
Stephen Lewis Foundation



Newsletter November 2015

Oomama Monthly Gatherings (OMG) are on the 3rd Tuesday, September to June, at The Kensington Residences, 25 Lakeshore Rd. West, Oakville. 9:00-12:00 p.m.

Guest speakers inform and inspire our work with the Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign. Join us for refreshments and a dynamic presentation! Presentations begin at 9:25 a.m. followed by Oomama's committee reports.

Save the Date!

Dec 16 – Members' Holiday Luncheon

Jan 13 – Virtual Stride Launch Party

Jan 19 – OMG

Feb 16 – OMG

Mar 5 – A Decade of Friendship Event

Mar 15 – OMG

April 2016 – Spring 2016 Newsletter

Co-Chairs' Report

November is a month of reflection for many reasons. Oomama has accomplished much in ten years and, in this anniversary month, we recall our beginnings and celebrate our accomplishments. A grass roots volunteer organization, one of over 240 grandmother groups across Canada, Oomama has contributed over \$560,000.00 to the Stephen Lewis Foundation since 2005. Together, we *are* turning the tide of AIDS in Africa. We were thrilled this month to have been nominated for the YMCA Peace Medallion and on November 19th members of Oomama joined others from the community at the Oakville Conference Centre for the annual YMCA Peace Breakfast. Although we did not win we were honoured to have been nominated and recognized for our work in the community and globally along with so many other amazing social justice advocates in Halton.

Before looking at upcoming activities, a brief update is in order. At our monthly gathering in May, we heard from the SLF who explained the yearly cycle of the projects we support in Sub-Saharan Africa. We learned that funding for SLF over the last few years has been steady in the \$10,500,000 to \$11,000,000 range. The Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign had its best fundraising year in 2014 with grandmothers across Canada raising approximately \$2,430,000.

Our June meeting normally wraps up our year and a delightful potluck luncheon was enjoyed at Carole Holmes' home in Oakville on a most beautiful day. However, this year our fundraising volunteers worked through July to host an exceptionally successful

summer event called "A Dare to SUP" (Stand Up Paddleboard).

In September, members of Oomama attended an ORRG (Ontario Regional Resource Group) Conference in Peterborough. Two members of the Retired Nurses Society of Botswana shared information about their work complementing existing free antiretroviral treatment programs with comprehensive, holistic palliative care and helping individuals reduce the stigma and strengthen the long-term capacity of families and communities. The keynote speaker for the day was Gerald Caplan who spoke about *60 Years in the Struggle for Social Justice* and also entertained us with anecdotal information about his friendship with Stephen Lewis!

Also in September, a ten-year celebration for past and present volunteers took place at the Harbour Banquet Centre. Grandmothers and "grand-others" gathered to commemorate our work with, and for the grandmothers in Sub-Saharan Africa by reconnecting and sharing memories, pictures, music and food. To honour their part in the birth of Oomama, nine of the original thirteen women were present and given a yellow rose.

In October, one of our members, Laurie Wierzbicki, was selected to attend an unprecedented Grandmothers' Gathering in Uganda and shared this experience at November's OMG through a wonderful presentation. We welcome visitors each month and you might even consider becoming a member! Please join us on the 3rd Tuesday of the month, 9:00 a.m., at the Kensington Residence, 25 Lakeshore Road West, in Oakville.

Chairs: Judy Henderson jmhenderson@sympatico.ca and Anne Walters anntwalters@hotmail.com



Fundraising Committee

Oomama goes 'Virtual' for Stride to Turn the Tide 2016

On June 6, 2015 solidarity and camaraderie could be seen and heard in the streets of East Oakville as 18 Oomamas and 3 Bram Grans walked 5 kms in support of Stride to Turn the Tide. Later they gathered for a barbeque at Wendy Merson's home to celebrate our ongoing support for the National Walk. A great time was had by all and just over \$7,000 was raised for the Stephen Lewis Foundation.

This coming year, Oomama has decided to do a "virtual" Stride following a map of several of the community-based organizations the SLF partners with in Africa. **Halton-Peel Virtual Stride**,



participants will register, buy pedometers, get pledges and walk as often as they can from January 13 to June 11, keeping a log of distance covered each day and reporting the total at the end of each month. The cumulative goal for the whole group is to cover the 10,254 km. between the organizations shown on the map. Oomama and the Bronte Grandmothers will form the team, inviting other members of the Oakville and Mississauga communities to join in our fundraising Stride. Team members will be able to walk wherever and whenever they want, tracking their steps for the whole day and logging them or the distance at the end of the day. No matter where you are, you can still track your steps. Learning about the projects that we are 'virtually' walking to each month will be both informative and fun!

We plan to have a Launch Party on January 13 to start us off on our journeys and over the next five months, learn about the projects that we are "walking" toward, learn how to register and collect pledges, and get information to track our distances. We will learn about our progress at our monthly meetings and on June 11, we will have a Celebration Party for our efforts. View the map at:

<http://www.grandmotherscampaign.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/Stride-2015-Virtual-Walk-Map.pdf>

Join the team by contacting Wendy Merson nursewjm@gmail.com or Sandy Milakovic sjmtoller@hotmail.com



DARE to SUP a Fundraising Success!

Oomama's summer Stand Up Paddleboard event was a tremendous success raising over \$16,000 in pledges for the Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign. It was an afternoon of sun, fun and inspiration for grandparents and grandchildren alike. Over 60 participants took on the 'Dare' to SUP' (Standup Paddleboard) along with Janet Solberg (Stephen Lewis's sister) who dared herself to learn a new sport! We wish to thank the Kuyper family of Surftech Canada along with Wendy Perkins and the Wai Nui Outrigger Canoe Club for hosting the event and providing both logistics and lessons for our participants. With support from many generous sponsors in our local water sports community, it was truly a magical day. The event took place in Mississauga at the beautiful Lakefront Promenade Park on Sunday, July 12 and included a Hawaiian dance performance, an outrigger canoe experience and a wonderful rooftop reception at the Mississauga Sailing Club complete with desserts from The Social Cupcake and ice cold Steam Whistle beer!

Photo above: Oomama's Carole Holmes and Pat McKee, SUP Instructor Mike Howes from The Paddle Coach, Janet Solberg and Yasmin Mussa from the Stephen Lewis Foundation. Additional SUP coaches who donated their time and services that day included Paddle Sport Performance and the Periwinkle Dragonfly Company.

Speakers and Education Committee



We closed out the 2014-2015 year with a presentation to the Grimsby Rotary Club who shares our commitment to the African grandmothers. They have, at every visit, given us a generous honorarium and, once more, sold many beautiful pieces of Kazuri jewellery. We appreciate their support immensely.

September heralded the start of another year for Oomama's Speakers/Education Committee. We are pleased to welcome new members, Rita Hutton and Beverly Carr, and know they will be great additions. This November, we have been invited again to speak at the annual "Dare to Dine Dinner" which is hosted by the Peace and Justice Committee (PJs) of St. Thomas Aquinas

Secondary School. Again, we appreciate the PJs and teachers at Aquinas who have always supported the work of our Speakers/Education Committee with generous donations to our campaigns.

We continue to work on updating and improving our various workshops and presentations as well as keeping ourselves up to date on information pertaining to the African grandmothers and their AIDS-orphaned grandchildren. To this end, members of the committee will be attending the second installment of the *Ask Her Talks* speaker series on World AIDS Day, Tuesday, December 1, 2015, at TIFF Bell Lighthouse in Toronto. Tickets are \$20 and can be purchased at www.askhertalks.com. This *Ask Her Talks* will feature five knowledgeable African women from Ethiopia, Kenya, South Africa, Uganda and Zimbabwe. They will share critical insights on the state of the AIDS epidemic and reveal what is working and what is not, in the world of philanthropy.

The Speakers/Education Committee continues to raise awareness with churches, schools, and other organizations. We would be delighted to visit your book club, or community group, and bring you up to date on the impact of our work in Sub-Saharan Africa. Extensive research has gone into the numerous options available for both school and community programs. Please visit the Speakers/Education section of Oomama's website for a complete list. Book ahead and have Oomama's GRAND-educators visit your school or community group in 2015-2016. Co-chairs: Pat McKee patmckee.ot@gmail.com and Lorraine Green lorrainegreen@bell.net

Sisterhood and Solidarity: A Life Changing Visit to Uganda

Our own Laurie Wierzbicki was selected to attend the first-ever Uganda National Grandmothers' Gathering in October and her experience was, in her own words, "overwhelming, inspiring and life changing." Laurie was one of 22 Canadian delegates and two British delegates there to listen, learn and observe the convening. Over 600 African grandmothers met for a three-day conference to foster solidarity, identify shared priorities and develop a plan of action. The end result was the powerful "Ugandan Grandmothers' Statement," calling for the protection of their human rights. Laurie and the delegates also visited a number of projects supported by the SLF. The evidence is undeniable that, in just ten years of the Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign, the African grandmothers have created remarkable strides and are turning the tide of AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa. To learn more about the remarkable work of the grandmothers and the organizations in Uganda who support these unsung heroes, consider booking Laurie to speak at one of your community groups. To read the Ugandan Grandmothers' Statement visit: <http://www.stephenlewisfoundation.org/get-involved/pastevents/ugandan-grandmothers-gathering>





GRAN Update (GRANDMOTHERS ADVOCACY NETWORK)

GRAN advocates at local, national and international levels to engage Canadian and international support for measures that will significantly improve the quality of life for Africa's grandmothers as they strive to hold their families and communities together in the face of the AIDS pandemic.

Access to Medicines for the Grandmothers in Sub-Saharan Africa and the orphaned children in their care has been an advocacy issue for the Grandmothers Advocacy Network (GRAN) since its beginning. A new access to medicines campaign presents an opportunity to alleviate the suffering and reduce the needless deaths of millions of children affected by pneumonia in the developing world. GRAN has joined Medecins Sans Frontieres/Doctors Without Borders (MSF) in a global campaign to improve access to a vaccine against pneumonia, the number one killer of children under five in the developing world.

Every year nearly one million children, 0-5 years of age, die of pneumonia and most of these deaths occur in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. Children infected with HIV are eight times more likely to develop pneumonia than HIV negative children. There is a vaccine to prevent pneumonia, but because of its high price it is out of the reach for the majority of the most vulnerable children.

April 2015, MSF launched A Fair Shot campaign <http://afairshot.org> calling on GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) and Pfizer, the only two pharmaceutical companies making the pneumonia vaccine, to drop their price to \$5 per child (for all three doses) for all children in all countries. The cost to vaccinate a child has skyrocketed in recent years and many countries are unable to absorb the rising costs.

This November 12, MSF launched a global petition asking GSK and Pfizer to reduce its vaccine so that all children in all countries can have access to the pneumonia vaccine. Please add your voice and spread the word so many more children can be saved from pneumonia. Please sign A Fair Shot petition at <http://www.afairshot.org/#petition-en> and invite your friends and family to sign it as well. Thank you.

GRAN co chairs Irene Clarke and Lorraine Green Contact: iclarke@pathcom.com , lorrainegreen@bell.net



International Women's Day 2016
commemorating the first 10 years of sisterhood with African grandmothers

Southern Ontario groups of the Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign are commemorating the first 10 years of the Campaign by hosting "**Grandmothers to Grandmothers: A Decade of Friendship**". The event, for members of the campaign and the public, will be held on Saturday, March 5, from 12 p.m. – 4 p.m.

at Redeemer College in Ancaster. Ilana Landsberg-Lewis will give the keynote address. Entertainment will be provided by folk singer and flutist, Allison Lupton and reggae group, Riddim Riders. Grandmother groups will participate in a marketplace. Tickets are \$30, and \$60 for those who wish to attend a private reception with Ilana. Contact 519-758-1141 or to purchase tickets online visit:

<http://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/2465696>



Connect with us at <http://www.oomama.org>
Oomama always welcomes new members.
Contact Donna at: ddhc5@cogeco.ca



We challenge ourselves, our community and our country to raise awareness and generate funds on behalf of grandmother caregivers in AIDS-ravaged Africa.



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