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Soiree provides time for celebration of Canadian Caribbean Association of Halton



Join us as we celebrate community, culture & history with a Caribbean night of entertainment, cuisine & good vibes!



**A FUNDRAISER FOR CCAH
YOUTH & CHILDREN PROGRAMMING**



SATURDAY, MAY 11TH, 2024



6:00 PM



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The Canadian Caribbean Association of Halton (CCAHA) has a long, storied history in the area, providing comfort to newcomers to the area.

Now a leading voice in promoting Afro-Caribbean culture and heritage in the area, they hold a major annual fundraiser every May to provide funds to increase programming supports for youth in the area.

Their CCAH May Soiree will feature entertainment, live performances, food, and something for just about everyone. The event will provide a chance for people to get “swept up in Caribbean culture”, says CCAH President Andrew Tyrrell.

“This will be an amazing event where people can have a good time, learn about us, have great cuisine and be inspired by our keynote speaker. Everyone will truly enjoy themselves, and it's all for a good cause,” he said.

The association has come a long way since their inception in 1977, and they've morphed to support the larger community around them.

“It started as a way to provide newcomers with a soft landing place. The federal government had a program where those who came to the country from the Caribbean could work as nannies, housekeepers and look after families. If they did so for two years, they got permanent residency,” he said.

“Many came with no links to the area, and wanted a better life. They'd get their residency and send for their families in the Caribbean. The association was a way for people in the same situation to meet.”

What began as a few meetings a year grew into dinners, dances and more formal gatherings. They began raising money in the community, getting political and voting, and now the CCAH is a large presence in the community.

“This has morphed into an association that isn't just for Caribbean, African or Black people. We support the entire community, whether it's through community events, in schools, or in other ways. We foster harmony and inclusiveness, and realize when the community as a whole does well, visible minorities benefit too,” he said.

The May events for the association always happened the Saturday before Mother's Day, and began as an AGM for the association. There would be a potluck, and people began to realize the importance of the day.

“Folks would get together and realize they only got to eat food from their culture when they got together. This was before the proliferation of African and Jamaican restaurants. The event grew bigger, moved to a banquet hall, and people started looking forward to it,” he said.

“Ladies would get together, bring raw ingredients and cook all day. There would be dinner and entertainment, and it became a fundraiser to aid programs in the community.”

This year they're focused on the theme of "Celebrating Culture and History", held over from their work during Black History month.

"In February we ran 45 in-person school and community events, and many more via our virtual on-line program delivery, but we realize as an organization we shouldn't just celebrate being Black in February. We use it as a jumping-off point for the region, and the enthusiasm has continued for the gala," he said.

The COVID-19 pandemic threw a wrench into things in 2020, and the association hadn't had a proper May Soiree since 2019 due to the difficult circumstances.

"Our president for 30 years passed away in October 2018, and by May 2019, we just hadn't figured things out yet. So we decided to get our act together, and we held a Mix-&-Mingle in their honour that October. We were going to be ready by May 2020, but then the pandemic came along," he said.

"We have many seniors in our membership, and we didn't want to hold a big in-person event until 2023. We decided our gala committee was a bit rusty, so instead we did a luncheon last year. We had over 100 people with games, giveaways and we gave the mothers roses. We gave out CCAH pens and mugs, and had a full food spread for \$5 each."

They will now be holding the Soiree on May 11th, 2024 at 6 p.m. at the OE Banquet & Conference Centre. There will be performances from CCAH's Steel Band, a live DJ, our community 4 pillar awards, and two-time Juno award-winner Sonia Collymore will be on-hand.

"Sonia featured on a program we did called "Beat The COVID Blues" and its going to be amazing to have her back. We'll also have our keynote speaker the Honourable Greg Fergus, who is the first black House of Commons speaker," he said.

What matters most to Tyrrell is that all of this is for a good cause in the community.

"The proceeds are going to help our youth programming, and we have a donor also matching sponsorships and donations up to \$10,000. We have a leadership summer program, reading corner, leadership-in-training, day camp and more. This is such a good cause," he said.

"People should come, have a good time, and learn about us. People can be inspired by our speaker and enjoy themselves, and it all helps the community."

[Tickets can be purchased here](#)

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