



## **African Women's Cancer Awareness Association**

8701 Georgia Ave. ~Suite 600~Silver Spring, MD 20910

Office: 301-565-0420~Fax: 301-565-0430

Website: [www.awcaa.org](http://www.awcaa.org)

# "Discovery through Recovery."

# AWCAA Mission

“To develop substantial partnerships to eliminate disparities in awareness, prevention and treatment of cancer and other life-threatening illness for African immigrant communities in the Washington metropolitan area, especially the medically underserved. We will accomplish our goals through education, empowerment and developing self-sufficiency.”

# Who We Are

- Our members include individuals who are from different African nations and reside in the D.C. metropolitan area, and around the world
- Headquartered in the Washington D.C. area
- Range of expertise:
  - Health Care
  - Finance
  - International Affairs
  - Information Technology

# Programs & Services

- **AWCAA engages in:**
  - **Advocacy**
  - **Education**
  - **Prevention**
- **Advocacy at the state and federal levels for equal access to healthcare services**
- **Education through health and wellness seminars and health networking events**
- **Utilization of a health online information database for our members**
- **An artist-in-residence program promoting the role that arts can play in enhancing the healing process**
- **AWCAA support group discussions on cultural competency**
- **Education scholarships and assistance for cancer orphans in the community**
- **Cancer prevention through increasing access to screenings, diet & nutrition workshops, and community leadership and development trainings**
- **Healthcare funding through events such as our Annual Cancer Walkathon and the Annual Continental Gala**

# Recent Programs

- AWCAA partners with organizations like Smith Farm Center for Healing and Arts in reaching underserved populations.
- AWCAA both participates in and conducts conferences to benefit the underserved population. In the past years, AWCAA has held several conferences to reach the underserved population.
- In March of 2008, AWCAA held a 1 day seminar on Colon Cancer.
- On September 27, 2008 an educational conference on Breast and Prostate cancer was organized by AWCAA. Approximately 275 people attended this conference.
- Also on September 27, 2008 a fundraising dinner was held to assist AWCAA care for the underserved. Approximately 180 people attended the dinner.

- **AWCAA has also been to the Ivory Coast Embassy to promote Breast Cancer Awareness.**
- **In January of 2007 AWCAA visited Sierra Leone, where with the help of our sister organization, The Pink Charity Fund, we donated the country's first mammogram machine.**
- **In October 13, 2007, AWCAA will travel to Enugu State, Nigeria. Once again AWCAA plans to conduct screenings, education and outreach programs for 300 to 500 Nigerian women.**
- **In 2006, we visited three different countries in West Africa.**
- **Our goal is to educate and empower women and men on the risk factors associated with breast cancer, and prevention and treatment. AWCAA's goals include the donation of more mammogram machines to countries that have none.**

# Breast Cancer Facts

- The early stages of breast cancer effects African women at a younger age than their Caucasian counterparts.
- Delayed diagnosis in African women decreases their chances of survival.

# Cultural Beliefs

Africans attribute cancer to religious beliefs which include:

- A Higher Power would not force someone to suffer from an illness such as cancer.
- One can “pray out” the disease.
- Cancer is caused by witchcraft or created by wicked people.

# Cancer Treatment

- Help of Native doctors when early signs & symptoms of cancer are apparent.
- Delay in medical treatment causes the cancer to advance to later stages of the disease

# Medical missions





# PICTURES











# Challenges

- Failure to seek medical help early
- Lack of adequate medical facilities in some villages & missionary clinics
  - Diagnostic equipment
  - Other modernized equipment
  - Access to city hospitals
    - Transportation problems (i.e. affordability)
    - Time away from family
    - Accommodations in the city and isolation
    - Separation from family
    - Financial cost of treatment
    - Use of home treatment remedies

# Successes

Importance of early detection:

- Educating women to do self-breast exams
- Annual breast cancer screenings & use of mammograms
- In Sierra Leone, AWCAA & Pink Charity Foundation donated the country's first mammography machine



# Conclusion

**“The basic infrastructure and resources to cope with the new health epidemic is basically not there and we have to do something about it. We know that there is a steam train that is coming down the track and we have a choice - we can either, build some new track or we can wait for the train to hit us. Which is it?”**

Alan Milburn, Former British Health Minister