

“An Awakening Call” - Evening with Special People **Gala Fundraiser Dinner Night by OCTD**

The Organization of Canadian Tamils with Disabilities (OCTD) held their first Fundraising Dinner on 19th July 2013 at the Princess Banquet Hall in Toronto. Despite the heavy rains and tornado warnings, it was an incredibly successful event bringing together around 250 supporters and other charity donors. Looking around the room it was very encouraging to see the hall packed with guests from different walks of life in support of a noble cause.

The OCTD had been in the forefront among the Tamil community helping many parents and children with varied disabilities. This is a unique organization among Tamils in Canada. Being a pioneer organization for Tamils, the OCTD has helped many parents to come out of seclusion from the society due to the stigma caused by the disabilities of their loved ones for no fault of theirs.

Founded in the year 1997 with a handful of people with disabilities, the OCTD has grown into a vibrant group doing valuable services to people with various mental and physical challenges that prevent them from leading a normal life. It has opened up a new horizon for its members, instilling a sense of belonging and togetherness among them. The OCTD and its members are committed to create awareness of the physically challenged Tamils among the Tamil community and to serve as the vocal point to form a social net of the disabled Tamils.

Sumi Prabharan was the energetic and lively Master of Ceremonies and the fundraiser for the evening. As a fundraiser she spoke passionately about the cause and empowered people to make an informed decision to support the OCTD. Many stories and testimonials were shared, and as a result, people donated generously. Sumi made it clear that Logi Mariathan, a co-founder of the Organization was the major motivating force for the event to expand its scope and activities for the benefit of the physically and intellectually challenged people.

The fundraising evening was filled with fun, food and entertainment. Nevertheless, there were moments when tears were brought into their eyes. The highlight of the event was the testimonial of a mother who spoke candidly of her experiences and emotions when she found that her child was a special need child. As well as Krishan, who expressed his views by sign language while his brother did the interpretation. This was a good example of how people are able to cope with utmost challenges and lead a satisfactory life. Two members of the organization with challenges. Umawaran and Ducksalan danced to the admiration of the audience.

Karuna, a committed member of the organization in a wheelchair, delivered a poem eloquently in Tamil in praise of the OCTD and how it has changed his life for the better. A video presentation of Jayanthi in a wheelchair, explained how she and her mother were able to get over isolation from the society after they learnt about OCTD and its activities. She thanked the organization for all the support and encouragement given to her.

Mr. Logan Kanapathy, Markham Councilor and a great supporter of the OCTD and the Tamil community, addressed the audience in praise of the services rendered by them. The Markham Councilor pledged towards the cause that was followed by business communities and well-wishers.

Logi treated the audience to an informative power point presentation. She traced the history of the organization and their future plans and goals. She made them aware of the many challenges they are faced with as well. "Life is tough enough for people with all their faculties intact, but for those with disabilities, life is even tougher" she said. Her presentation was well received by the attentive audience.

Nalini, Yoga, Jothy, and Viji, all active members of the OCTD commended Logi who had the insight to organize such a fundraising evening. As well, to have the courage to do the 'Skydive' for the same cause on Sunday, August 11th at 10:30 am at 5714 Smith Blvd, Baldwin (Hwy 48 & Smith Blvd). Viji sang a touching, melodious song (Vaalthupaatu) for her efforts to help OCTD.

During the latter part of the evening, Sumi once again reiterated the purpose of the event and asked members of the audience to help raise a substantive amount to support the OCTD to expand the scope of the organization. Many from the audience pledged generously, making the event a great success. Logi thanked the generous contributors, volunteers, friends and families whose supports made this event a most successful fundraiser.

The night was thoroughly enjoyed by all in attendance. A sumptuous dinner was served that was followed by the able and the disabled, joyfully hand-in-hand dancing night away. Indeed, it was "**an awakening call**" to all! Please visit their website: **www.octd.ca**

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