

Dare To Rise marks first year of community impact at Royal Rose



Absane ?Abbie? Ibrahim found herself at a crossroads when she and her two sons left a negative domestic situation.

Overwhelmed by all she needed to do to forge a new path, she realized she needed a village of support to rise above the adversity ? but didn't know where to turn.

In looking for her village of support, she laid the foundation of a supportive village of her own ? and co-founded Dare to Rise, a foundation that has brought together women of shared experiences to uplift families, support individuals, and help forge change.

The non-profit foundation marked a full year of community impact last week at Aurora's Royal Rose Gallery celebrating how far they've come over the last twelve months while also acknowledging there's still much work to do in helping community members ?rise up? to achieve their full potential.

?To rise it takes a village,? says Ibrahim, who co-founded Dare to Rise with Chika Oh. ?I went to Family Court in Newmarket and there you're just a number ? they're nice, they're warm, but you're so overwhelmed that you don't know what you need to do for your next step. They give you a pamphlet with all the legal aid names, there are hundreds of names, you don't know who to choose ? you go home and you're really panicking. You have kids to take care of, you don't know what you're doing, and your brain just freezes.

?Going through that process was extremely overwhelming. I'm educated, I'm a strong person, but to go through that alone was not fun ? and it was the hardest moment in my life. I'm part of the community, I work a lot, but nobody knew I was going through that?. There are so many other women going through this, so I had the audacity, the courage, to create this organization. This is my story. This was my niche I wanted to help, give them a template, and I wanted to take the word ?single mother' back and not be ashamed, because single moms are doctors, nurses, cooks, cleaners, and we're everything in one person.?

Ibrahim describes the celebration of their successful first year of mentorship and lending a hand as a ?perfect? evening.

Since its inception, the grassroots-supported organization has stepped up to assist 55 local moms and their families. Help has ranged from securing them diapers and infant formula to providing free one-on-one life coaching.

?They feel welcomed, they feel heard, they feel seen, and that, for me, is encouragement to continue,? says Ibrahim of working with clients through the foundation. ?There are so many organizations out there and they're all good, but the way we approach things is we do it organically one-on-one. We listen to them because all the women involved on our team have been through something like that. For them to look at us [knowing] where we've been and where we are today, they feel more connected and that they can do this, too. It's a reflection of different cultures, different backgrounds, and different stages of our lives, and over the past year there has

been a lot of organic referrals to us.?

Dare to Rise is not content to rest on the laurels of a successful first year, however. They're hard at work launching new programs and workshops for women and youth to address gaps they see in existing services, building upon their foundations of Legal Navigation, Mental Health & Wellness, Creative Expression & Arts, and Community Empowerment and Literacy.

They're also aiming to increase their community outreach and build that village that is at the heart of it all.

?I would love for people to connect with us to volunteer,? says Ibrahim. ?We're open to people from different fields ? youth, to women, and men, too.?

For more information about Dare to Rise, how to apply for services, and to become involved as a volunteer, visit daretorisefoundation.org.

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter