



in the news



Preferred Health Care's AGM pays tribute to front-line staff

Cultural theme of Africa recognizes the diversity of team members

Thursday June 11, 2009

By Camille Jensen

RICHMOND HILL, Ont. - Colourful dresses, conga-line dancing and African music greeted the attendees of Preferred Health Care Services a nnuual general meeting (AGM), held at the company's head office June 10.

The AGM is a way for the company to come together and pay tribute to its front-line staff, many of whom work in the community and are not familiar with their co-workers, according to Tracy Jones, president of Preferred Health Care Services.

Jones welcomed the staff, remarking it's their diligence that would be trumpeted throughout the evening.

"We are celebrating the hard work and commitment that is shown by each of you in your daily activities," says Jones. "I am proud to be a member of our team and know that it is your dedication to providing

quality and care and improvement that contributes to our excellent reputation in the community."

Each year, Preferred Health Care Services chooses a cultural theme for its meetings, to showcase the diversity of staff members.

This year's theme was Africa and included a group of staff members dressing in ethnic clothing from five countries: Ghana, Tanzania, South Africa, Nigeria and Kenya, while dancing in a conga-style.

Mardy Cometa, Preferred Health Care Services client-care specialist, sang a song in Zulu, while engaging the crowd to participate.

African food was served from a local restaurant, and included dishes such as jollof rice — a west African dish composed of tomatoes, rice and chili peppers — as well as spicy stews with black-eyed beans or boiled eggs.

Albert Akonnor, pastor

and presenter on Africa, spoke to the crowd about the rich diversity of the continent, which comprises 61 countries and is home to more than 2,000 languages. Akonnor recognized the many struggles still existing in Africa, but adds the good news stories stemming from countries like Botswana, Angola and Ghana, provide him with hope.

"It will take some time, but Africa will rise up again," says Akonnor.

Approximately 30 per cent of Preferred Health Care Services staff members are of African descent, and Leisureworld's CEO David Cutler and Leisureworld's director of purchasing Ivor Zagnoev are both from South Africa. Zagnoev, who could not attend, provided African music for the evening.

Cutler was on-hand at the event and says he enjoyed listening to Akonnor share the history of the continent, while

raising awareness about Africa and other countries.

"I think it's great. In North America we have very little idea about what happens there so it's great for people to understand about the difficulty of some of the situations," says Cutler.

For personal support worker Karama Baya, who is from Sudan and has worked for Preferred Health Care for more than one year, the homage to her culture was a special part of the night's events.

"It feels good that we are recognized," says Baya, who enjoyed eating a stew with boiled eggs, which she identified as an Ethiopian dish.

Service awards were handed out for staff members working with the company for one, three, five and 10 years, followed by dessert. Rene Rodgers, Preferred Health Care's director of client services, received a 10-year service award.