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## A Tribute to Valerie Mah

Sometimes in life there is a person whose very essence is kindness and goodness. That is an apt description of Valerie Mah. If the late poet and civil activist, Maya Angelou, had ever met Valerie Mah, it is certain that they would have been kindred spirits. Valerie was the very embodiment of what Maya meant in that famous quote about how “people never forget how you made them feel.” Meeting Valerie was akin to meeting an old and treasured friend. Her caring shone through her eyes and her words vocalized it.

The depth of concern and compassion that Valerie had for people was evident in the wide range of her involvement with all ages from young children to seniors. She helped to raise thousands of dollars for the Toronto Educational Opportunity Fund to provide young children with a hot breakfast before school. Valerie was the Inaugural Chair of the RTOERO Foundation. Here she raised funds for research into improving life for aging adults. She served on many Boards including the Yee Hong Centre for Geriatric Care and the West Park Healthcare Centre.

Valerie believed that every person had the right to live with dignity and respect no matter the station in life. Her community outreach was indicative of this belief. The East Chinatown community knew that she was there to support them. In her quiet but firm way she accomplished many things for the community. These include the traditional Chinese Arch with the welcome sign in Chinese and the beautiful murals on many of the buildings along Gerard Street East and Broadview. In addition, Valerie served on the Community/Police Liaison Committee for 55 Division.

Mother Teresa once said that “life is an opportunity, benefit from it.” That is what Valerie did and, in doing so, she helped to make life better for many people.

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