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Healing Overcoming Persevering Educating

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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No More Trauma Drama!

Tower of Hope Program Celebrates Third Annual Class Graduation

FLORISSANT, MO – 12 women celebrated the completion of a year-long program designed to free them from the life-long effects of childhood trauma in a graduation ceremony at St. Ferdinand Park on October 17, 2020. Citing indicators such as PTSD symptoms, nightmares, inability to maintain interpersonal relationships, substance addiction, depression and erratic behavior, the women shared their stories of childhood physical, emotional and sexual abuse as well as neglect and living in homes where adults were violent, addicted and/or incarcerated during their childhoods.

Tower of Hope Ministries provides a 12-month program of education through knowledge-based research, faith-based strategies and therapeutic approaches to understand and and heal the aftermath of trauma. The group met in person during the months of October 2019–January 2020 with three women attending via video conference from Joplin, MO, Arlington, TX and Little Rock, AR. Monthly online Zoom meetings for all began in February with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. In between meetings, they completed learning and processing activities, such as reading articles and books, journaling, praying and meditating on the Word of God. Participants learned about the physical and emotional effects their brains and bodies sustained after the heightened cortisol and adrenaline surges endured during traumatic episodes. They learned to rely on their faith and relationship with God to further understand how to affirm themselves and receive their healing. When needed, they also received individual coaching sessions from the executive director.

Tower of Hope Ministries Founder and Executive Director Dora Washington, says her story is “not a *rags-to-riches* tale, but rather a ***broken-to-mended*** chronicle.” After enduring extreme neglect and physical and emotional abuse from her parents, she was further abused sexually in a number of foster homes she was assigned following the death of mother. After a breakdown following the collapse of her first marriage, she became aware that her trauma had multiple effects on her (1) body, through sicknesses, (2) behavior, through erratic incidents, (3) emotions, causing an inability to love herself or others, (4) social life, through the inability to form or maintain close relationships, and (5) mental health, through a loss of peace. She learned to access her memories of traumatic episodes and to re-live the pain, which led to finding peace with those memories and began the undertaking of healing her body, mind and spirit as she developed an approach that would later become the **Trauma Drama** program, a process of finding one’s authentic self and developing emotional and spiritual skills to handle the challenges of life.

Dr. Washington earned a doctorate in Education (*The Effect of Childhood Trauma on the Higher Education Learner*) from Lindenwood University in 2018. She had already begun developing the curriculum and materials for the **Trauma Drama** program to help others overcome obstacles, heal from hurt and find freedom. “I told God that if I could help just one person, I would feel like my childhood adversities were worth the suffering I endured. He has blessed me to help many and I am grateful.”

The first class began September 2017. Since then, groups have formed and graduated each October. The class of 2018 had 4 students and the class of 2019 had 6. 2020's class is the largest yet. Along with the **Trauma Drama** class for women, there is now **The King's Men**, a group for men who meet to support each other in their journey to heal from trauma and equip themselves with the social-emotional tools to sustain intimate relationships with their families. Many of the men acknowledge *father wounds* from dysfunctional families and childhoods without appropriate parenting by their fathers.

During the graduation ceremony, each graduate spoke of the changes in their lives brought about by the work they had done during the year of the program. One graduate said, "I am now living my authentic life. No more hiding." Another said that she is no longer a people-pleaser at the expense of her health. "I can say no and prioritize my health over needing to please others."

A third woman said, "I was healed from a 17-year addiction to prescription painkillers and I'm no longer in pain." Sondra Strong said, "I just spent the best year of my life in this class of amazing women. I thank Dr. Washington, the Tower of Hope leadership team and my fellow graduates who loved me unconditionally while I sought God and his purpose for my life," in a powerful statement about her relationship with God. Another said, "Tower of Hope helped me realize that I was not a victim of molestation and sexual assault, but a survivor. The workshops and lessons helped me become an overcomer!"

Dr. Washington said, "While not every person who comes to Tower of Hope suffered a childhood as complex as mine, everyone who comes to Tower of Hope brings a past that has followed them to their present. And the one thing we all have in common is that **we refuse to take the** pain into our future."

Media organizations in need of more information are asked to contact Ms. Deborah Antoine, Media Spokesperson by email: deborahrantoine@gmail.com, or call (314) 766-8685.

Included with this email:

- Digital version of the Tower of Hope newsletter — more complete descriptions of the Trauma Drama program—all three phases—are included on page 8.
- Photos from the October 17, 2020 event, held at St. Ferdinand Park in Florissant, MO.