



Body Confidence Award winner Alicia Vianga, left, is the founder of After Breast Cancer, a charity that provides free prostheses to breast cancer survivors. JESSICA SMITH CROSS/METRO

Cancer survivors get a major boost

BODY CONFIDENCE

Charity helps pay for breast prostheses



Jessica Smith Cross
Metro | Toronto

Alicia Vianga saw a need and decided to fill it.

Too many breast cancer survivors were coming to her lingerie boutique on St. Clair West for breast prostheses but couldn't afford the high cost.

"The women who had insurance walked away feeling beautiful, confident, and the ones who did not have insurance and not enough money walked away feeling sad and down," she said. "I've seen women with socks stuffed in their bras, or tissues stuffed in their bras."

"I've seen women who are eight, 10 years in as a survivor and have never known what it is to have a prosthesis because they can't afford it."

So Vianga started a charity called After Breast Cancer to raise money that goes toward free prostheses.

For that, she was honoured at this week's Body Confidence Awards in Toronto. The awards, in their third year, honour champions of body confidence, body positivity and body diversity.

The prostheses are all about confidence, especially for the women who told Vianga their homemade solutions of socks or tissues were contributing to the difficulties they were experiencing re-engaging with their social lives after cancer.

A single breast prosthesis costs about \$500, plus the cost of special bras. The government will reimburse about \$195 — but women are often struggling with medication

costs at the same time.

Vianga was nominated for the award by Lynn Manwar, who passed away from breast cancer just three days before the award gala.

"This is her," Vianga said, crying as she showed a picture of Lynn in a breast cancer fundraising calendar. "This is more important to me than anything else."

+ THE AWARDS

The Body Confidence Awards are run by Jill Andrew and Aisha Fairclough, who blog at fatinthecity.com. They honour Canadians "actively fighting against stereotypes, judgments, policies, and discrimination that attempt to label and discredit marginalized bodies."

FASHION

Stylish looks catering to curvy

In the mid-to-late 1990s, Simone Denny's band, Love Inc., had managed to put four singles on top of the Canadian dance charts.

But for Denny, something as simple as buying clothes remained a challenge.

Heroin chic was in.

"There wasn't a lot of plus-size curvy girl fashion at that time," she said. "We'd have photo shoots and it would be, 'Umm, that's not my style. That's more for a size two. I'm a thicker girl, I have thighs.'"

Denny haunted vintage stores looking for plus-size raver duds on her own.

She donned tracksuits and aviator goggles for You're a



Simone Denny. LIZ BEDDALL/METRO

Superstar and a puffy vest and jacket for Broken Bones — not typical pop star attire.

Today, a lot has changed.

Plus-size fashion bloggers and curvy girls on Instagram have formed a community where compliments are copious and inspiration flows.

"I think we're going to get to the point where we have size 2 to 24 or 26," she said. "I'll be able walk into a store, and just buy it."

Denny, who performed at the Body Confidence Awards, is preparing to release her debut solo album, the R&B and soul-inspired Stereo Dynamite Sessions.

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