

Caribbean Today

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Vol. 23 No. 9

AWARD WINNING NEWS MAGAZINE WITH THE LARGEST PROVEN CIRCULATION IN FLORIDA GUARANTEED

TRINIDAD & TOBAGO'S



50th INDEPENDENCE
1962-2012

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FAST FORWARD



CELEBRATING

25
Years

Caribbean Today

25th Anniversary Celebration

CELEBRATING 25 YEARS

CARIBBEAN TODAY

25th Anniversary Celebration

FORWARD: The wonderful journey to Caribbean Today's 25th anniversary

For over 25 years, since Dec. 1989, **Caribbean Today** has covered the challenges, dreams, hardships and celebrations of the

Caribbean diaspora and the region.

Since its founding, the journey of the Caribbean Today fam-

ily has mirrored the acclimation, assimilation and integration of the Caribbean diaspora in communities across the United

States. At the same time, Caribbean Today has served as a bridge of communication and connection for the Caribbean diaspora to the home countries of their heritage.

The news magazine was born from a dream among young immigrants from Jamaica in the cubicles of their desks during

and more established corporations began to take notice of the growing demographics of the Caribbean American community. We were growing up.

Caribbean Today matured in the first 10 years to extend its coverage to many issues impacting people of the Caribbean. It addressed issues of immigration,

25 YEARS

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Publix checkout counters in the 1960s

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Caribbean Today was launched 25 years ago. At the helm was Publisher Peter Webley, second right. Among those who assisted him in those early days were, from left, Alberto Conte, Michelle Cawley Dreseris and Diane Maxwell.

long hours at the Kendall Gazette. One likes to sell advertisements and another had a passion for the written word. Together, this dream envisioned Caribbean Today to be a representation of the cultural diversity of all Caribbean nations.

At the time, we lived our vision: Michelle Cawley Dreseris a Jamaican editor, Peter Webley a Jamaican publisher, and Alberto Conte a Panamanian graphic designer.

In Dec. 1989, 10,000 copies of Caribbean Today's first issue hit stands in South Florida, Atlanta, Houston in the U.S., and Kingston, Jamaica. The Miami Herald ran half-page stories about the launch of the paper in its various editions.

Celebrating its 25th anniversary, Caribbean Today has every right to be proud of its accomplishments. The Caribbean Today family survived many challenges and pitfalls for any family-owned small business in America. Many Caribbean-owned companies operating in South Florida supported the growth of the news magazine and paralleled the paper's growth over the years. This journey of one generation to the next is a testament to the fortitude and innovation of the Caribbean diaspora communities across America.

In the early years, Caribbean Today struggled to meet deadlines and the needs of other growing small businesses which had themselves just started to settle in America. The late 1970s and 1980s was a period of high migration for the Caribbean diaspora, especially in the states of New York and Florida. As these communities settled, bought homes, elevated themselves through education, more businesses were born and became partnering advertisers in the news magazine. Likewise, larger

health, education, arts and culture, travel and leisure, business and community development. With the professional journalism contributions of four editors in 25 years - Jamaica's Dreseris, founding editor; Guyana's Edwin Ali; and, Jamaicans Gilbert Dunkley, and Gordon Williams (C.T.'s current editor), they all contributed their time, creativity, and strengths to the growth of the publication. So too has the support staff, including long serving members Sabrina Moss-Solomon, graphic designer, and Dorothy Chin, account executive.

Caribbean Today became an established media staple in the offices, stores, hotels and other gathering places across the U.S., Canada and the Caribbean region.

The Caribbean Today family has lived this American dream together with the joy of new additions to the family, losses of family members, global travels and unique experiences, some which have been highlighted in the news magazine. This bond between team members and their readers is an unbreakable friendship.

Since 1989, through major political, social, cultural and technological transitions or changes, including several wars, hurricanes, 9/11, social media and the crash of the U.S. economy in 2008, Caribbean Today has been a constant staple for its readership family.

To the Webley family, we are indebted for their indelible mark and journalism legacy for the next generation. We cannot wait for the next chapter.

Thank you for being there with us and for us.

- Caribbean Today Family.
(With contributions from Peter Webley, Edwin Ali and Michelle Cawley Dreseris)



CELEBRATING 25 Years CARIBBEAN TODAY 25th Anniversary Celebration

Dr. Olive Chung-James: Jamaican medical pioneer in Florida

MICHELLE CAWLEY DRESERIS

"I am a very proud Jamaican!" said soft-spoken Dr. Olive Chung-James from her southwest Miami, Florida office.

In Sept. 2012, after practicing medicine for 34 years and owning a private practice for 28, Dr. Chung-James sold it to Plaza Medical Centers (PMC).

"I'm not retiring," she said smiling. "I'm enjoying my clinical work, treating my patients and not having to run a business."

"I wanted to be a doctor when I was about 12 years old. And, I may have been the first Jamaican woman doctor practicing here in the South."

Dr. Chung-James is licensed to practice in the United States, Canada and the Caribbean. She married Jamaican Earl James in 1972. They have two daughters and two grandchildren. In 1977, she graduated medical school at the University of the West Indies (UWI) in Jamaica. She completed a medical internship in Trinidad, before moving to Canada in 1978.

"Earl worked for Jamaica's foreign service, so we lived in different countries," said Dr. Chung-James.

At the University of Toronto's Medical School (UTMS), she completed residencies in family/community medicine and public health, and one in

epidemiology. UTMS is recognized internationally for its clinical, educational and research excellence.

In 1983, Dr. Chung-James's family moved to Miami, where she became an assistant professor at the University of Miami.

"Then, I got the private practice bug!," she said. "I opened practices in north and southwest Miami, later selling the north office. My quiet little practice in southwest Miami mushroomed, with my Caribbean community's support."

What does she think about the U.S. Affordable Care Act (ACA) or "Obamacare"?

"ACA is going to be great for patients," said Dr. Chung-James. "It is really disgraceful, that we – the USA and leader of the world – have not been providing good, affordable health-care for our people!"

"Developed countries like Canada, Great Britain, Sweden, Norway and Scandinavia, have been providing universal health-care for their people for many years. No system is perfect, but Canada's works very well, and Canada really takes care of the elderly."

"Here, we worry about paying health insurance and medical bills. Stress is bad for your health."

"(Recently) I prescribed a colonoscopy for one of my patients. But, he can't afford the test, because his insurance will not cover it ... Another patient



Dr. Chung-James

needed a Cat Scan of his stomach. But, he can't afford the \$1,200 deductible. It's sad."

ACA benefits for patients in 2014 include prohibiting insurance companies from discriminating people with pre-existing conditions, dropping sick patients, billing patients into bankruptcy because of an illness or injury or limiting patients' annual or lifetime benefits.

"One of my patients, because of the ACA, will have health insurance for the first time," said Dr. Chung-James. "He's happy."

Family physicians are the foundation of healthcare for the ACA.

"Nationally, we are short of family physicians because many doctors had specialized," Dr.

Chung-James said.

Injured workers have to get "healthcare" from worker's compensation, not their private health insurance.

"I don't practice worker's comp," said Dr. Chung-James. "I don't like worker's comp. That is not a patient's health insurance. The physician's boss is the insurance company. That can be a conflict of interest when you want to treat a patient, or to send them to a specialist, because the insurance company wants to save money."

Dr. Chung-James celebrates her family's diversity.

"My dad, Henry Chung, came to Jamaica from south China as a young man," she said. "He owned a grocery business in Kingston. He barely spoke English, but somehow learned patois."

"I remember him reading his Chinese newspaper all the time, congregating with friends in Barry Street, and playing Mahjong," she said smiling. "My mom, Agatha, was a Jamaican 'mix up' of white, black, and Hispanic from Panama."

"In Jamaica, a person's color is not important," added Dr. Chung-James. "But, in the U.S., they want to put us in little racial or ethnic boxes. So, I check 'other'."

"Jamaicans may look different, but we are 'Out of Many, One People'," she said proudly.

Story and photograph by Michelle Cawley Dreseris, a freelance writer for Caribbean Today.



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**I would like to Congratulate
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Howard Duperly: Spreading the Caribbean's message on air

JASON WALKER

Being a radio personality on a strictly Caribbean-themed program in the United States takes a lot of work filled with chal-



Duperly

lenges.

Caribbean culture is not the most dominant in the U.S. and much of the broadcast information and music is not familiar to the majority of the listening audience. Caribbean programming also competes with other radio stations with broadcast

themes more familiar to those in America.

For 23 years Howard Duperly has been at the forefront of Caribbean culture's popularity, working as producer and host of the "Reggae Ride" radio show on WDNA 88.9 FM. Duperly's on air moniker is "Flagga" and he has made "Reggae Ride" a staple of South Florida, a catalyst for the growth of the reggae loving community.

Duperly, a native of St. Ann, Jamaica, started as an intern while a senior at the University of Miami. He calls his

work "very rewarding."

"It allows me to communicate with listeners on an international level," he explained, "and confirms the fact that people from all over the world appreciate and enjoy Jamaican music."

Duperly believes his "mission is to preserve and promote authentic reggae music."

"In other words," he added, "showcase the artists who bring an original approach to the arena. This includes artists from the ska era to the present."

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 4B)



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HAZELLE ROGERS: A Caribbean voice in Florida's House

DAWN A. DAVIS

Hazelle Rogers made history in 1996 when she was elected commissioner for the city of Lauderdale Lakes, Florida, the first person from the English-speaking Caribbean to hold office in the southeastern United States.

But that was just the beginning.

Today she is the Florida state representative for District 95, which includes Lauderdale Lakes, Lauderhill, Plantation, Margate, North Lauderdale, Oakland Park and Tamarac.

The Jamaican native's foray into becoming a voice for the people began several years before that historic year with her work in residential community building and representation.

"My involvement in the local community motivated me to run for an elected position," Rogers explained. "I was involved with my homeowners' association and realized that I could be more effective for my community by being part of the decision making body that represented my community and city as a whole. Inspired by the late Willy Webb, I decided to give it a try."

ADVOCATE

Her first try was not victorious, losing the commission seat by two votes, proving that "every vote counts."

As a Lauderdale Lakes

commissioner, Rogers was the face for the city with a large concentration of Caribbean American residents. A vocal advocate for funding, her persistence and feisty Caribbean spirit got her noticed as she argued for the city's fair share. Lauderdale Lakes' revived economic corridor, along its main thoroughfare State Road 441, is one of the successful initiatives Rogers spearheaded.

It seemed a natural progression for Rogers to try larger waters. She ran for Florida state representative in 2008 and became one of the few Caribbean voices in the House. She has been re-elected subsequently.

"As a state representative, I have a much larger constituent base," said Rogers. "Today, my district consists of 154,882 residents, and includes seven cities. At the city commission level, there are only 32,000 constituents. The amount is even less if your city is divided into districts."

CHALLENGES

But the decisions Rogers's makes not only affect her constituents.

"The main responsibility of the state legislature is to balance the state's budget," she said. "However, as legislators, we pass legislation and policies that not only affect the area I represent, but the entire state of Florida."

The state office carries chal-



Rogers

lenges. Rogers decried the cuts in funding to Florida's neediest among the most difficult initiatives she's had to deal with.

"In prior years we have seen major cuts in education, health care and state government," she explained. "This year, in education, we saw an increase in K-12 per student funding, however it still fell short of recovering the massive losses incurred over the past few years. This session, acceptance of Medicaid expansion would have provided health care to 1.2 million uninsured Floridians."

As a Democrat, Rogers must work with Republican col-

leagues in the Florida House. At times, this too has proven difficult.

"We don't always see eye to eye on all issues," she said. "However, we sometimes are able to reach a compromise for the benefit of the people of Florida."

Yet, despite the battles, Rogers has been successful in introducing bills that have become Florida law, in addition to sponsoring or supporting others. During her first term, she tabled bill HB 1493, which deals with substance abuse and mental health services, and HB293, which pertains to motor vehicle title transfer. Both bills became

law. In 2011 she sponsored a bill addressing a student dress code of conduct, which was also signed into law.

SETBACKS

Rogers has sponsored several bills which have not passed through the State Legislature, including one that would allow small businesses to participate in state contracting by unbundling larger contracts. However, perhaps one of the most vexing was the bill that would have made it law that Florida grant in-state tuition to U.S. citizens who live in Florida, regardless of their parents' immigration status.

Rogers said she's committed to her constituents, including the large Caribbean community in her district. That includes networking with those she serves.

"As a senior Caribbean-elected official, the community often asks me to participate in their activities," she said. "I try to attend and support as many events as I can because all of these events can be utilized to educate my community on the events that are taking place at a state level."

Asked what the future looks like for her, Rogers said: "Service and representation, regardless of the office is important to me. If it is God's will for my life and the community is willing to support, who knows."

Dawn A. Davis is a freelance writer for Caribbean Today.



Howard Duperly: Spreading the Caribbean message on air

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3B)

AMBASSADOR

Duperly understands talent. He has no place for shortcuts.

"Artists who employ quick profit schemes, rehashed stuff have no place on my show," said Duperly.

"... The Reggae Ride is a very important vehicle, because it exposes listeners to music that they don't usually hear on the average station. Through the music, listeners also get facts and tidbits about the Jamaican culture. The Reggae Ride audience comprises mostly of Hispanics and Anglos. So, the show acts as a sort of an ambassador for Jamaica."

It's largely up to Duperly to make "Reggae Ride" work. Among his most memorable moments is the annual WDNA on-air pledge drive, when listeners call in to make financial contributions to keep the show on the air.

"To know that many people are actually contributing money

to support my program is somewhat like a vote of confidence, a seal of approval," said Duperly.

The former regular editorial contributor to Caribbean Today still banks on the news magazine, which is two years older than his own show.

"Caribbean Today is a respected and reliable source for news and information," said Duperly. "C.T. is to be applauded for its longevity, particularly in an era when many publications, large and small, are fading away."

"Caribbean Today is consistent and I referred to it for confirmation on a variety news related items. If it's in Caribbean Today, you know it is reliable."

"There are many memorable articles, but the ones that cover the political scene are always interesting."

Jason Walker is a freelance writer for Caribbean Today.



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Caribbean Today 25th Anniversary Celebration

'Eddy' Edwards: Promoting Caribbean culture through entertainment

JUDITH HUDSON

C. 'Eddy' Edwards is recognized as one of the leaders in South Florida's Caribbean community, especially in entertainment marketing.

He is a strong advocate for Caribbean people. He displays a drive, fuelled passion and desire to propagate the cultures of the Caribbean in South Florida.

The Jamaican native migrated to the United States in 1979. He lived in New York before relocating in South Florida in 1981. Edwards is founder and chief executive officer of Riddims Marketing, Inc., an integrated marketing and events organization. The company is well known for organizing the annual "Jamaican Jerk Festival". The event was first held at C.B. Smith Park in Pembroke Pines. It was relocated to Markham Park, in 2005. The festival is now in its 12th year.

"It first came to me as a crazy off-the-wall idea," Edwards said. "I wanted to call it a 'Big Jerk-Off', comparable to the 'Chili Cook-Off'. My wife refused to be associated with such a name. The idea sat for a few years and then we launched it as the 'Jamaican Jerk Festival' in 2000."

CHALLENGE

Edwards has been married for 26 years, he is the father of a son. He said the most challenging problem with the festival is keeping the ticket price down "while delivering a first class production with high-caliber entertainment; developing new features to keep the event fresh and exciting."

Besides the festival, Edwards focuses on reaching Caribbean communities in North America. The company produces a radio program call "Caribbean Riddims", aired on WZAB 880 AM, as well as



Edwards

events for clients.

"We also co-produce a television program with BarriVision Productions, 'My LiKKle Food Spot', which I host," he said.

The program is aired in New York, New Jersey, Connecticut and Canada.

Edwards describes himself as a person who doesn't like the limelight and one who lives in harmony with the universe. He believes in "doing unto others as

you would have them do to you." He hopes admirers will describe him as honest, fair and hardworking.

When not working, Edwards said he likes "tending to my garden at home with my wife; running and exercising is another pastime I enjoy as well as listening to music, jazz, calypso, reggae, classical, mento and R&B '70s and '80s in particular."

PUSH

Edwards is the founding president and former director of Jamaica Awareness

Incorporated, a non-profit organization that presents Jamaican culture. During his tenure, the organization was established as one of the premier presenters of cultural events featuring Caribbean music, fine arts and drama.

Edwards has positioned the company as one of the premier marketing organizations in South Florida's Caribbean com-

munity. His expert knowledge of the community, innovative ideas, vision, extensive database, a carefully built network and a record of accomplishment of proven successes, are some of the attributes that have gained him many accolades.

When asked what in his life he would change, Edwards said: "In hindsight, there are many things I could have done better, but generally I am happy with my life and would not want to make any major changes. My journey is what has molded me into the person I am today."

Edwards said there is nothing else he would rather be doing today, and his advice for anyone who wants to start a business is: "Never give up on your dream. It is going to take a lot of hard work and long hours, but the rewards are satisfying."

Judith Hudson is a freelance writer for Caribbean Today.



Suzette Rochester: The face of VMBS focus, service in South Florida

JUDITH HUDSON

Victoria Mutual Building Society (VMBS) in Miami Gardens has a big focus on customer services and results.

The company has been servicing the South Florida community for five years. Jamaican-born Manager Suzette Rochester oversees the execution of sales, public relations, advertising and marketing initiatives to enhance the awareness of the VMBS brand and financial services to the Caribbean diaspora in Florida and the rest of the United States, with an objective to increase net savings inflows and the mortgage loan portfolio at Victoria Mutual, Jamaica.

EDUCATION

Rochester attended Meadowbrook High School in Jamaica. She then moved to England where she attended Chartered Institute of Marketing and received a post-graduate diploma in marketing. She then returned to Jamaica and later attended the University of Technology where she earned a bachelor of business administration degree in management studies.

Rochester also earned a master of arts degree in communication studies from the University of The West Indies. She said she was inspired by her family which stressed the importance of education.

"I am from a close knit family and extended family, and we support and embrace each

other," Rochester explained. "In my formative years, my parents would always instill in me a sense of independence, confidence, Christian values and principles, love and respect for others, as well as the importance and value of education, and hard work to achieve success."

STARTING OUT

Before working at VMBS in the U.S., Rochester was employed at the company's Jamaica location, where her job included public relations and advertising.

"I had the responsibility for the advertising, corporate, and public relations programs of the VM Group in Jamaica, United States of America, and the United Kingdom," she said.

Rochester said she has seen the company flourish over the years and, "after Victoria Mutual Building Society received its non-banking license from the (U.S.) Federal Reserve Board in 2007, my greatest achievement to date was in my being given the indomitable and auspicious task by the senior management team in Jamaica to set up the VMBS Florida representative office in the United States of America in July 2008."

Rochester explained the license is for operations in Dade County, Florida, and that her scope of work involved finding a suitable location in Miami



Rochester

Gardens from where the company could meet Jamaicans and friends of Jamaicans in the diaspora. It would also prepare and execute sales, marketing, public relations and human resources strategies and initiatives in an effort to impact VMBS's bottom line: increase its net savings inflows and mortgage loan portfolio; coordinate and manage the banking policies in keeping with the requirements of the Federal Reserve Board, as well as facilitate annual meetings with examiners of the Federal Reserve Board to maintain the certification of the non-banking license of VMBS.

Sherene Lingo, a customer service associate at VMBS, has worked with Rochester for four years. She described her as hard working and a team player. "Suzette is extremely warm,

kind and caring," said Lingo. "She also possesses strong Christian and moral value, which I believe are extremely

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 6B)

Congratulations

to the editors and staff of
CARIBBEAN TODAY
on the occasion of the
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CELEBRATING 25 Years CARIBBEAN TODAY 25th Anniversary Celebration

JAMAICA GEM: Yap family turns LEASA into big South Florida business

DAWN A. DAVIS

Not only did George and Einez Yap lack experience when they started their manufacturing business in 1977, they also lacked the capital needed to run such an enterprise. But that did not stop them.

Today, LEASA Industries is Florida's largest manufacturer of bean and alfalfa sprouts, tofu, herbs and other specialty health foods.

"We came to Miami with just \$50, but we were determined to work hard, not just survive," said George Yap.

The company was named using the first initial of each family member: L. George, Einez and their children Andrew, Sean and Allison. LEASA struggled to its feet, making \$175 per week in sales. Although the Liberty City-based company grossed \$5,000 in sales its first year, the losses were thousands more.

However, it was determination and the spirit of "sticktoitiveness" George and Einez learned from their Chinese ancestry that kept them going.

"I worked long hours for seven days a week and my wife Einez worked two jobs, as well as operating the business, managing the employees and handling the bookkeeping," George explained.

"If it wasn't for her we wouldn't have made it because without her help and hard work

we couldn't have continued in this business."

BLOW

Einez died in 2005, a devastating blow to the family and company. But George was determined to carry on the business in memory of his wife. In her honor, he George has continued one of the initiatives he and her started in the early days. Located in one of Miami's economically depressed areas, their employees came from the mainly African American minority local residents, many of them considered unemployable. That practice continues today.

"Some of my workers are ex-convicts, welfare recipients, and drug addicts who would otherwise not be able to find work," said George. "But, I don't care about their past. They, like all of us, deserve a chance in life. They are hardworking, just like anybody else. So, that's how we have always operated."

The company's 80-plus employees manufacture about 15,000 pounds of sprouts and a minimum of 5,000 pounds of tofu per day. The sophisticated hydroponic system, the heart of the 65,000 square foot warehouse and production facility, is the life blood of the mechanism that produces products for the niche health food market.

At first distributing to small grocery stores, LEASA is now a major supplier of sprouts, tofu, fresh cut vegetables, and soy



Yap

products to major chains such as Publix and Winn-Dixie supermarkets, Walmart Superstores, Sedanos Supermarkets, Sysco Food Service and other health food specialty outlets. The manufacturing company's distribution chain has also crossed state lines, serving places like Georgia, Alabama, Tennessee, South Carolina and Alaska. Its products are also sold throughout the Caribbean, in The Bahamas, Cayman Islands, Puerto Rico, Aruba and Jamaica.

FAMILY EDGE

Maintaining family as the foundation, LEASA is still run

by family members. Yap's sibling Richard is an engineer that ensures the proper functioning of the hydroponic equipment. His son Andrew runs the day-to-day operation as president, while other family members are involved in other areas.

Yap also credits his early life experiences in Jamaica for his success.

"My parents migrated to Jamaica from China some time in the 1920s, and I was one of eight children born in Kingston," he said. "I saw them working hard at their haberdashery business downtown Kingston until it was destroyed by fire in 1949. But, they never gave up. They started another business, this time a bakery. But that business was also brought down by disaster, Hurricane Charlie in 1951." These events severely

affected the family, but Yap would learn survival strategies. Although he did not finish high school, he learned to take chances and, with other family members, started to sell Jamaican patties. That eventually fizzled. He then got into the gaming business, but this too failed.

By the early 1970s Yap was ready for the next opportunity. It came in 1976, during the political turmoil in Jamaica. That's when he fled the island with his family to the U.S.

EXPANSION

LEASA has expanded to include a Logistics Division that offers delivery services to other food companies. The company also represents enterprises involved in similar food manufacturing and distribution, expanding its variety of soy and vegan product offerings to include veggie cheeses, vegan salad dressings and noodles.

"Yes we are expanding, but we haven't forgotten our roots," said Yap. "We continue to reach out to our local community and will always remain active in enhancing Liberty City."

"Of course, we are also members of the Caribbean community, so we support many of the groups and organizations that are active in the region. We have come far and it is thanks to my Jamaican Chinese upbringing."

Dawn A. Davis is a freelance writer for Caribbean Today.



Suzette Rochester: The face of VMBS focus, service in South Florida

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5B)

critical for anyone I consider a friend."

"... Suzette is someone I admire," Lingo added. "Her work ethics, mannerism is what makes her the hardworking and dedicated person that she is."

When she is not at work, Rochester finds the time to "maintain balance." She believes that in the fast-paced environment in which she lives and work, she must try to find time to relax with close friends and family, as well as practice a healthy lifestyle through eating habits and practicing yoga and strength training.

Rochester's commitment and loyalty to the American and Jamaican community has earned her numerous awards and accolades. Among them are the Karl P. Wright President's Award in 2002, for outstanding work in

enhancing and promoting the corporate citizenry of VMBS, and the Award of Distinction by the National Association of Jamaican Associations in 2005, for service and contribution to the advancement of the group in the diaspora and VMBS.

A devoted Christian, Rochester believes "God will continue to give me his peace and increase my capabilities to continue to work with distinction at Victoria Mutual, and to assist many Jamaicans and friends of Jamaicans realize and achieve their financial independence, and create wealth through real estate acquisition in Jamaica."

Judith Hudson is a freelance writer for Caribbean Today.



"As we celebrate our 25th anniversary in business we would like to take this opportunity to extend congratulations to Caribbean Today on your 25th anniversary. Thanks for keeping us informed of both local and Caribbean news on a monthly basis with your publication. You have served well the Caribbean community in North America over these past 25 years and we certainly wish you continued success in the future."



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CARIBBEAN TODAY

MEDICAL MINDSET: Healing is more than a job to Dr. Wentworth Jarrett

MICHELLE CAWLEY DRESERIS

Family physician Dr. Wentworth G. Jarrett starts healing the moment you step into his spa and medical practice in West Kendall, Miami.

Light scents of lavender and vanilla, soft pastel blue and green walls and music encourage you to breathe and relax. The waiting room is decorated in a blend of soothing tropical and Zen.

"I designed our office to be as relaxing and therapeutic as possible," said Dr. Jarrett. "Our goal with the wellness center is to take care of people before they get sick, as well as treating them medically when they are sick."

Dr. Jarrett even purchased the building next to a lake so patients can enjoy relaxing lake views while they wait. Spa guests also enjoy a lake view during massages. Colorful tropical fish lazily swim in Dr. Jarrett's giant saltwater tank in the lobby, silently doing their bit to reduce the blood pressure of patients. Jamaican artwork on the walls reminds visitors of Dr. Jarrett's roots. He enjoys works by Jamaican artists.

A black glass cabinet show-

cases Chinese jars and statues. Asian-influenced healing products on the crystal shelves hint at some of the spa's services: Thai and Swedish massages, body wraps, hot stone massages, facials, yoga, pilates and radio frequency treatments.

A separate entrance – connected to the main medical lobby – welcomes spa visitors who have come to indulge in stress-releasing treatments, exercises or therapies. Brides-to-be often bring their friends for a special treat before the big day.

Sandra, Dr. Jarrett's wife, works with her husband and the staff, to make patients – and spa guests – as comfortable as possible, welcoming them with a smile.

JOURNEY

Dr. Jarrett, 55, was born in Kingston, Jamaica. He graduated from Calabar High School and completed his medical degree at the University of the West Indies School of Medicine in 1982. He worked for Princess



Dr. Jarrett

Margaret Hospital in Nassau, Bahamas from 1983 to 1985 and completed his residency in the department of Family Medicine at Jackson Memorial Hospital between 1985 and 1988. In 1988, he opened Dr. Jarrett's Wellness Center in West Kendall.

Dr. Jarrett also participates as a team director with Vitas Hospice Miami and stays in touch with a team of nurses who

care for terminally ill patients. He visits patients and oversees their care.

"I am a board certified member of the American Academy of Family Physicians, and a member of the Dade County Medical Association," he said.

Dr. Jarrett has staff privileges at Miami's area hospitals, including: Baptist Hospital of Miami, West Kendall Baptist, South Miami Hospital and Jackson South Hospital. He serves as a voluntary professor on several medical committees and participates in various health, educational and community programs.

"Many of my patients are from Jamaica and the Caribbean and they have supported our practice through the years," he said. "I encourage them to discuss all the supplements and 'cures' they are taking. We are open to holistic treatments, as long as they meet medical guidelines, and are medically safe."

CAUTION

Some Jamaicans believe in "natural" or "herbal" medications, like morhinga and sour sop juices, to treat cancer and various ailments.

"People have to be careful

with what they take," said Dr. Jarrett. "I invite my patients to discuss what they are taking. Some natural treatments can cause your blood to thin. If you're already on a blood thinning prescription, that could be a problem."

"Prostrate cancer is the number one health problem for men from the Caribbean, and the number one killer of men in Jamaica," he added. "Access to health care is the main reason they are not diagnosed early."

Dr. Jarrett welcomed President Barack Obama's Affordable Care Act (ACA) in the United States.

"Health care should be a basic human right in the United States and the world," he said. "I love being a doctor, and I always wanted to be one. My practice is not really work. It's more like a healing extension of my family and home, except I see my patients here. It's my mission."

The Jarretts have two sons, Tor, 22, and Omar, 21.

Story and photograph by Michelle Cawley Dreseris, a freelance writer for Caribbean Today.



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Bastien: Founder of FANM/Haitian Women of Miami leads fight for rights

MICHELLE CAWLEY DRESERIS

Haitian American human rights activist, clinical social worker and humanitarian Marleine Bastien, founder and executive director of Fanm Ayisyen Nan Miyami, Inc. - or FANM/Haitian Women of Miami - has been on a mission for most of her life.

She has been passionately fighting for the rights of Haitians - especially women and children - for more than 30 years. Others have come to her too, including African Americans, Latinos and people from the Caribbean islands.

Bastien will calmly negotiate with the "powers that be", but this dynamic and persistent leader - who has organized and marched through the streets of South Florida, West Palm Beach, Washington and other cities - will not be deterred from her lifelong mission: To champion the rights of people who are discriminated against, disenfranchised, underserved or marginalized in South Florida - and ultimately - the world.

"My goal is to have a world where women are able to partake in all decision-making processes," explained Bastien.

"Our fight for justice is global, even though our efforts may be local!"

For the past 22 years under Bastien's leadership, FANM has been a major catalyst for addressing social service needs, health, education, economic development, women's rights, affordable housing, literacy, and human and civil rights issues that affect Caribbean people.

Bastien follows the examples of her Haitian parents, who provided free health services, education and advocacy for needy people in her hometown of Cap-Haitien. But Bastien has taken their examples to a global level. She earned bachelor's and master's degrees in social work from Florida International University. She has received national and international awards, including from Amnesty International and the Ford Foundation, and has participated in national and global forums.

In April 2013, the University of Miami held a reception to honor FANM's and Bastien's achievements, and highlight UM's acquisition of their new FANM historical collection.

This month, Bastien is scheduled to be in Atlanta, Georgia to receive the 2013



Bastien

Inaugural U.S. Human Rights Movement Builders Award, for "...strengthening the human rights movement in the United States, in particular, at the grassroots level."

ACCOMPLISHMENT

"Opening FANM in 1991 was a big accomplishment for me," said Bastien. "We have developed a one-stop center where low income families can have access to a myriad of important, and sometimes, life saving services."

FANM is a not-for-profit (501)(c)3 charitable organization that offers health programs, a legal clinic, immigration assistance, educational and social service programs, and free work-

shops to people from diverse cultures.

"We provide services to about 5,000 low income people annually - Haitians, African-Americans, Latinos, and people from the Caribbean," said Bastien.

FANM and Bastien get calls for help at all hours - sometimes in the middle of the night.

"We know there's a problem in our community when our switchboard starts ringing constantly and all the lights are red!" said Bastien.

"We receive referrals from the community, various organizations, the Department of Children and Families, and the courts."

PROTEST

Bastien still organizes protest rallies when more traditional methods aren't working. In 2013, FANM demonstrated for comprehensive immigration reform and rallied in front of the Broward Transitional Center to stop the deportation of all immigrants who will benefit from reform.

FANM has been organizing locally and nationally for the past 10 years in support of the DREAM Act. Since 2010, FANM has been leading the

campaign for the Haitian Family Reunification Parole Program and a campaign for the past three years for Temporary Protected Status (TPS).

The Affordable Care Act (ACA) - or "Obamacare" - has created a flood of new requests for FANM's assistance from families which speak mainly Haitian creole or Spanish.

"People need affordable health care," said Bastien. "But, they are having difficulty navigating the process, and they need help to register for the ACA Marketplace. I need more staff to help them."

CHALLENGE

Lack of funding is FANM's biggest challenge, according to Bastien.

"Demands for our services have significantly increased, but grants to support our needs have decreased," she explained.

Bastien, divorced, is a single - and proud - parent of three sons - Omar, Oscar and Tarik.

Story and photograph by Michelle Cawley Dreseris, a freelance writer for Caribbean Today.



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LIFE FRIENDS: AFJ set on mission to improve the lives of Jamaicans

JASON WALKER

American Friends of Jamaica (AFJ) has become one of the most productive associations doing philanthropy work with the Caribbean island.

AFJ's mission is to "improve the lives of Jamaicans by supporting initiatives that advance self-sufficiency. The organization envisions a world in which all Jamaicans have access to basic education, health care services and economic opportunities."

AFJ has been in operation for 31 years. Among its major milestones was a 40-foot container with medical equipment and supplies presented to the Pediatric Ward at Cornwall Regional Hospital in Montego Bay, Jamaica. Equipment included an ultra sound machine, vital sign monitors, suction machines,

pulse oximeter, defibrillators and nebulizers. Also included were electric beds, cribs and infant diapers, gurneys and wheelchairs. The equipment and supplies are valued at approximately \$97,000.

EDUCATION

Another initiative included the Rose Grant Foundation award, which focused on providing a laptop and study materials at the library to prepare children for future educational pursuits. This safe learning space has staff on hand after school and on Saturdays to provide assistance to children up to age 15 years.

AFJ also helped equip the St. Andrew Care Center in Kingston, Jamaica with six new Dell computers, printer, scanner and a surveillance system. The computer lab is an interactive,



AFJ President Emeritus Ambassador Sue M. Cobb works with students at the SACC Computer Lab opening in Kingston, Jamaica.

web-based educational center for at-risk street boys.

AFJ has declared its intent to work with organizations and businesses such as Caribbean Today to enhance its own mission.

"We would like to expand our relationship with Caribbean Today," the AFJ noted. "Our mission is known by a few and we hope that Caribbean Today will work with us to expand our voice so we can increase the aid we provide to the island of Jamaica."

Jason Walker is a freelance writer for Caribbean Today.

Gordon 'Butch' Stewart: all-inclusive mastermind

The genesis of what is now the world's leading all-inclusive resort chain really began in 1968 when Jamaica's Gordon "Butch" Stewart founded an air conditioner service and distribution company called Appliance Traders Limited (ATL).

The business was a resounding success. However, in 1980 when Stewart needed hard currency to buy air conditioning units from a company based in the United States, he decided to explore the hospitality business, despite having absolutely no experience in this field.

The entrepreneur took the plunge and bought an old hotel in the tourist resort town of Montego Bay in the western end of Jamaica and pumped millions of dollars into the project. Seven months later Sandals Montego Bay was born. It became the flagship of the most popular luxury resort chain in the world.

With the birth of the all-inclusive Sandals chain, Stewart became a force to be reckoned globally. Today the Sandals Resorts are the epitome of world class luxury and comfort.

From its small beginnings, Sandals has grown into a multi-billion dollar company located throughout the Caribbean and recognized around the world.

SHARING

Stewart's drive for excellence isn't selfish. He always strives to improve the lives of fellow Jamaicans. This was evident when Jamaica faced a foreign currency crisis in 1992 and



Stewart

when he agreed to take over the national airline Air Jamaica.

With his impeccable track record, Stewart was bestowed with Jamaica's court highest honor - the Order of Jamaica which bears the title "honorable". Stewart also received the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Humanitarian Award from the Jamaica-America Society.

He attributes success to hard work and the dedication of the over 10,000 people who work in the Sandals chain across the Caribbean.

As for Appliance Traders, the company that started it all, it continues to thrive, selling everything from cars and auto parts, water pumps and generators.

Stewart is a self made man who has defeated the odds. He continues to reach for the stars and flies the Jamaican flag high.



Publix Supermarket still making shopping in America pleasure

Across Florida, the Publix Supermarket chain dots the landscape, catering to thousands of residents.

With well over 900 outlets in the state, the company is one of the largest and fastest growing employee-owned supermarket chains in the country.

Founded in 1930 in Winter Haven, Florida by George W. Jenkins, it has grown into a Fortune 500 company.

Publix has consistently recognized the large consumer base in South Florida that includes customers from across the Caribbean.



VARIETY

"We work closely with our vendors and offer a variety of products to serve our Caribbean customers in a unique way," said Nicole Krauss, media and community relations manager.

"It's also important for us to

reach all of our customers, including those a part of the Caribbean community, through a variety of marketing and advertising outlets as well as support their community efforts."

With a variety of products geared towards the consumer with a taste for the Caribbean, Publix Supermarket is committed to playing its part in deepening the bond with the Caribbean at large.



Grace serves up the taste of the Caribbean

The Grace label is synonymous with Caribbean cuisine worldwide and is recognized as the region's premier food producer and distributor.

It all began on Feb. 14, 1922, when Dr. John J. Grace and Fred William Kennedy, both previously employed by Grace Limited - a subsidiary of W.R. Grace and Company of New York - took a leap of faith, giving birth to the Caribbean's largest and most dynamic corporate entities.

Over the years, GraceKennedy has expanded and diversified, changing from a privately owned enterprise to a



Record

public company listed on the stock exchanges of Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago.

EXPANSION

The company, in spreading its wings, also focused on the diaspora, which inevitably includes the vast Caribbean community scattered across the state of Florida and beyond. Derrick Record, general manager of Grace Foods International, attributes the success of the company to its ability to go beyond Caribbean boundaries.

"The challenge always is to organize ourselves in a way that the Caribbean community goes way beyond the normal boundaries," Record said. "It is fairly easy for Grace Kennedy. In a

way, we were taken by the Caribbean to different places and we kind of expanded from that."

South Florida is one of the largest markets for Grace outside of the Caribbean.

"It is one of the most significant markets," added Record. "It's certainly one of the top 10 that we serve."


"There are thousands of things that are being done weekly and daily to make Jamaica better. It should be something that every Jamaican should be extremely proud of. It's something that's a part of Jamaica and the Caribbean's DNA."

GraceKennedy is a blueprint for success and a brand that truly embraces "One Caribbean".



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CAMEO: Keen's dream becomes reality through medical missions



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In 1985, David Keen's lifelong dream became reality when he graduated with a medical doctorate degree from Howard University in Washington D.C.

This achievement came as no surprise to his immediate family as Keen, the young man from Jamaica who attended the Calabar High School, had only one career desire - walking in his father's footsteps and becoming a medical doctor.

"This was David's passion that he got from both of us," said Keen's mother Yvonne, a retired public health nurse.

"We tended to the poor from when they were small. David's late father was a doctor, who actually refused the position of senior medical officer in Jamaica, saying that it would take him away from his patients.

"He opted to be a medical officer of health and due to this we traveled to different parishes and later established a private practice in Spanish Town, St. Catherine.

"Our work across Jamaica saw us dealing with the poor," she added. "This is what our children saw and, with the



Dr. Keen

exception of one, they are all involved in the medical field. David never wavered from being a medical doctor, so I was not surprised at his career choice."

After Howard University, Dr. Keen did his residency in Florida, went on to work at Leon County's Lincoln Neighborhood Health Clinic, and, two years later, became the medical director of the Wakulla County Health Department, a position he's held for 11 years.

PASSION

With a passion for the less fortunate, Dr. Keen always had the desire to peruse medical mis-

sions and, in 1993, the family-operated medical mission got underway. By 2003 this evolved into what is now known as the Caribbean American Medical Educational Organization (CAMEO).

Today CAMEO, with Dr. Keen at the helm, consists of approximately 20 volunteers, including doctors, interns, paramedics and others who participate in at least five medical mission trips to Jamaica, Haiti and Belize each year. So far, the team has accomplished 40 missions.

In 2004, Jamaica's then Governor General Sir Howard Cooke thanked CAMEO for its ongoing assistance in Jamaica's continued development, noting that "the goodwill and love shown signified members' care and concern for their homeland."

There is no stopping Dr. Keen as he continues to pursue his passion of reaching out to others - ensuring that CAMEO continues to touch lives through medical missions.



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JOB SATISFACTION: Dr. Paul Moo Young finds dentistry a pleasure

**MICHELLE CAWLEY
DRESERIS**

As a child, Paul Moo Young would wait with his siblings in the dentist's office in Kingston, Jamaica. But, unlike many people, he was not nervous.

"Our dentist had a clinic, with a lab on the side," said Moo-Young, now a dentist. "I would go and watch the guy who was making dentures and molds, until it was my turn to see the dentist."

This relaxed, easy-going 51-year-old Jamaican opened his own practice in south Miami, Florida in June 1991.

"Dentistry to me is fun," said Dr. Moo Young. "I couldn't see myself doing anything else."

"I was always good at science, and I knew when I was in high school that I was going to be a dentist. I've always been good with my hands. I fix everything. My hobby is collecting old cars, and fixing them up. I'm very detail-oriented."

"The technical part of making crowns and bridges is difficult. You have to really know what you're doing, and you either have the hands to make them – and the critical eye – or you don't."

BACKGROUND

Dr. Moo Young attended high school at Campion College, before his parents moved the family to South Florida in 1977 during Jamaica's "turbulent" political years. He attended Cooper City High and in 1983 earned a bachelor's degree in biology from Barry University. In 1987, he graduated from Howard University's prestigious College of Dentistry in Washington, D.C. He was the first dentist in his family.

"The top 13 dental graduates at Howard in 1987 were from the West Indies – mostly

Jamaican," said Dr. Moo Young. "We really dominated the Class of 1987!"

"I married Nicole in my last year at Howard," he added. "She's also Chinese Jamaican. Nicole studied at Tufts, and later became an orthodontist, and we joined practices."

Dr. Moo Young said he's board certified to practice dentistry from Maine to Florida. He tries to shed his profession's bad rap.

"I tell parents all the time not to give their children negative ideas about going to the dentist," said Dr. Moo Young. "Some parents put the fear of God into their kids."

MENTOR

Dr. Moo Young mentors high school students from Miami-Dade Public Schools who are interested in dentistry.

"I enjoy coming to work in the mornings," he said. "The money is the 'brawta' (Jamaican for bonus)."

He loves spending time with

his family and friends, often outdoors. If he's not working, he's boating, fishing, diving or hunting ducks.

"Every year, I go bird shooting in Jamaica with my son, my uncle Ernest, and friends," said Moo Young. "I haven't missed one season since I've been in the USA. Our family loves going to Jamaica."

Just as he rebuilds decayed teeth and makes new prosthetic devices for people's mouths, Dr. Moo Young's hobby is collecting, rebuilding and resurrecting old, decrepit "small British sports cars." He's given new life to a 1971 Mini Cooper, and a 1972 MG he brought from Jamaica.

"They're beautiful and collectible now," he said.

CREDIT

For his success, credit goes to mom and dad.

"My parents – Derrick and Jeanette – raised us very well, on a limited income," Dr. Moo Young said. "My mom pushed all of us to succeed. She was a



Moo Young

teacher."

He understands maintaining dental health is expensive, but believes the cost is justified.

"The costs to set up a practice are very high," said Dr. Moo Young. "The materials are expensive and the malpractice insurance dentists must have is extremely expensive. Dentistry,

like any other drug or pharmaceutical, is very expensive."

The Moo Youngs have two children, Justin, 22, and Jessica, 16.

"In 2007, we took Jessica to China," said Dr. Moo Young. "The Chinese people would ask me why I didn't speak Chinese. I am Chinese Jamaican. I never learned Chinese."

"We didn't learn about prejudices until we left Jamaica and came to live in America," he added.

"I used to show my children my high school yearbook from Jamaica and the mixture of students in my class – black, brown, white, Chinese, Hispanic, Jewish, Lebanese, German, and others. I tell them we all consider ourselves Jamaican."

Story and photograph by Michelle Cawley Dreseris, a freelance writer for Caribbean Today.



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Caribbean Today 25th Anniversary Celebration

OCHO RIOS FOODS: Spreading Caribbean taste beyond the region

DAWN A. DAVIS

You know those days when you have a craving for solomon gundy spread over crisp water crackers? Or when your mouth just watered for a nice roast

breadfruit, but you're not in the mood to hunt down a fresh breadfruit and roast it yourself?

Well, thanks to Ocho Rios Foods, most of Jamaicans' favorite foods from back home are easily available and ready to

eat when you are. President and Founder Aston Lue had similar cravings. So he decided to bring a little piece of Jamaica to South Florida.

Lue founded Ocho Rios Foods in 1987, officially launch-

ing on the road to his American Dream after whetting his appetite for entrepreneurship in the family business.

"My first steps as an entrepreneur were in Kingston, Jamaica spent at my grandparents small grocery store fetching soft drinks, icy mint, ice cream, bun 'n cheese and patties," Lue explained.

BRANCHING OUT

He spent his college years in New York and eventually relocated to Miami, Florida with his young family, where the idea of manufacturing and distributing Jamaican and Caribbean-inspired foods blossomed with the help and dedication of his wife Michelle, plus children Benjamin, Jeanette and Celena.

"We invested weekends and many a summer packing Irish moss, gum Arabic and linseed!," said Lue. "Later, trade shows at the Miami Beach Convention Center, demos and merchandising at supermarkets.

"Michelle is a major contributor to Ocho Rios's success. The discipline and physical endurance instilled in her at an early age in the rigors of Chinese folk dance training provided vital support in the warehouse, office and, of course, as family chef. I still call her 'Wonder Woman', since it's just the two of us and the family here in the U.S."

The company president acknowledged that he was left with the "easy stuff," - road sales, marketing, warehouse logistics and purchasing.

INFLUENCE

He also credits his recently deceased father William Lue for his artistic spirit and talent colorfully represented on the product labels. The Caribbean foods manufacturing company recently established an endowment in honor of the family patriarch. The Ocho Rios Leadership and Ethics Foundation will support and promote ethical leadership and entrepreneurship for disenfranchised youth in Jamaica, the Caribbean and the United States.

"How many of us wished that when we were young, we not only got good nurturing, but also the compass of what our skills, talent, passion are?" said Lue. "Colombia got US \$2 billion aid over two years to decrease its drug trade through military means, but only to see it stabilized. Changing course, youth job training was launched in year three and the drug trade fell!

"Cayman has much less natural resources than many nations," Lue added. "Yet their exchange rate is strong. Relatively, countries like Jamaica have the substantial



Lue

opportunity to nurture and, provide internships for young creative minds to achieve peace and prosperity in the generations to come."

Ocho Rios Foods' reach to help those across the Americas and the Caribbean is a reflection of the wider community it attracts and serves. Its snacks, such as the crunchy sweet plantain chips and tangy tamarind balls, are popular among the Cuban, Puerto Rican, Mexican, Colombian and Nicaraguan communities in South Florida. Products like coconut water, coconut milk, pigeon peas and Scotch Bonnet pepper sauce are staple items among Caribbean immigrants.

POTENTIAL

As a Miami-based company, Lue saw the potential benefits of marketing to both the Latino and Caribbean markets. The company is also active in community-building and is often involved in fundraising and other events with organizations such as Jamaica's Friends of Good Shepherd, Caribbean Bar Association, Jamaican Alumnae Associations and the local Veterans Administration Hospital.

Lue said Ocho Rios Foods is taking a balanced approach to expansion. The company opened a manufacturing plant in Atlanta, Georgia in 1995, bringing its total warehousing and operating space to 88,000 square feet. Lue is also looking at opportunities on other continents.

"We constantly seek ways to perform better, participate in the trending markets," he explained, "so if one day there is an Eight River in Chinese on the label, you will remember the origin."

Proud of his Chinese heritage, Lue credits his cultural diversity for his work ethic, success, and balance.

"Admittedly, my immigrant grandparents were my role models in their work-life ethic," he said. "Grandpa even took the time to show me how to make a kite with a center stalk of the

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 14B)

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We salute publisher Peter Webley and his team for the tireless work over the years to create an outstanding product that educates and inspires our residents on the U.S. mainland.

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While I enjoy nothing more than promoting the beauty, benefits and value of traveling to the U.S. Virgin Islands, the focus is on you. We celebrate you and what you do to make the Caribbean as successful as we can be - your work, your ideas,

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Beverly Nicholson-Doty is commissioner of tourism for the United States Virgin Islands.



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CELEBRATING 25 Years

CARIBBEAN TODAY

25th Anniversary Celebration

Stephanie Sylvester helps molds Belize into Caribbean community

JASON WALKER

The community representing Belize in South Florida is growing, becoming more important to Caribbean people in the area.

Although the population is only estimated at 7,000 in South Florida, according to the consulate, Belizeans are represented in various areas of the state's life and culture.

The person seen as the representative of this community is the honorary consul for Belize in Miami. For nine years (1999-2008) the person who held that demanding, yet voluntary job was Stephanie Sylvester.

According to Sylvester, her responsibilities included "advancing Belize's interest in the southeastern U.S. This entailed, issuing visas for entry into Belize, representing Belize at various official events, providing information for Belizeans living in the southeastern U.S. and hosting the prime minister and governor general when they visited."

MEMORABLE

Sylvester's most memorable moments included "helping to form the CARICOM Consular Corp, representing Belize at the 94th annual NAACP general meeting and helping to bring a new level of professionalism to the Belize Consulate office and bringing a group of Garifuna dancers from Belize to perform in a Caribbean Dance Diaspora."

Sylvester succeeded in these areas with assistance from a team. According to Sylvester, her mother was "her assistant and

ran the day to day of the office, which helped make being honorary consul effortless."



Sylvester

The former honorary consul called the Belizean community's involvement "very necessary."

Without that, she added, she "would have been a one person band, not very effective or beautiful to listen to."

Sylvester said the community members "were very supportive and provided assistance when called upon to assist." In the future, she wants the Belizean community to "continue their participation in local politics so that their voices are heard and their needs considered."

On becoming honorary consul, Sylvester was introduced to Caribbean Today news magazine, which she said "provides us with access to the latest in the Caribbean community." She would like to see "that it continues to be the conduit of Caribbean news both locally and internationally."

Sylvester stepped down as honorary consul in 2008.

"After nine years," she said, "... it was time to give someone else an opportunity to continue grow and develop the office."

Jason Walker is a freelance writer for Caribbean Today.



OCHO RIOS FOODS: Spreading Caribbean taste beyond the region

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12A)

coconut palm leaf, tiled like a bow with thread, glued to a rectangular shape cut out from grease paper, very thin and light, but fairly resilient to wind. We used cooked rice grains mashed lightly against the paper for glue. The next day, after the glue

dried, (the kite) flew effortlessly in the slightest breeze ... What I learned from those times: Make the time to balance life, no matter how busy we are."

Dawn A. Davis is a freelance writer for Caribbean Today.



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Dr. Eduardo Padron: One immigrant's journey to educate a nation

JASON WALKER

Dr. Eduardo Padron has been the president of Miami Dade College (MDC), which serves a student population of 175,000, since 1995.

He was born in Cuba and came to the United States as a refugee at age 15. In 2009, TIME magazine included Padron on the list of "The 10 Best College Presidents". The following year, Florida Trend magazine named him "Floridian of the Year". In 2011 The Washington Post newspaper named Padron one of the eight most influential college presidents in the United States. That same year, he was awarded the prestigious 2011 Carnegie Corporation Centennial Academic Leadership Award.

Last year Padron received the Citizen Service Award from Voices for National Service, the coveted TIAA-CREF Hesburgh Award for Leadership Excellence and the Aspen Institute Ascend Fellowship. Padron is nationally respected for his work and innovations in education. Below is an edited version of a recent interview Padron did with Caribbean Today's freelance writer Jason Walker:

JASON WALKER: Please tell us some major milestones that have occurred over your tenure?

EDUARDO PADRON: I have spent more than 40 years advocating for the rights of all who

wish to receive a quality, affordable education. MDC now enrolls and graduates more minority students than any other institution. I am extremely proud of that.

We also admitted our two-millionth student this fall in a community that has a population of 2.5 million people. We have touched every household and family in the county in a positive way during more than half a century.

MDC has also elevated the academic stature of all community colleges, all while preserving our mission to teach underserved populations. Our commitment to student success has become an international model for learning, as evidenced by the multitude of higher education leaders from all over the world who visit MDC each year and take best practices back home with them.

We enroll students from more than 186 countries, including all Caribbean nations, and provide them an opportunity to receive an education that will lead to greater economic freedom and prosperity. We offer more than 300 programs of study and several degree options, including career certificates, associate and baccalaureate degrees, and are constantly expanding to respond to workforce needs.

Since my tenure began as president in 1995, we have launched the Virtual College,



Padron

The Honors College, the Dual Language Honors College, many bachelor's degrees that were firsts at community colleges, the Miami Culinary Institute, and many more, to name a few, and with the support of the best faculty around and top administrators.

When I had the honor of serving as president of the Wolfson Campus, we started Books by the Bay, which evolved into the Miami Book Fair International – the nation's largest and finest literary event that brings many Caribbean authors to the community, took on the management and reinvigorated the Miami International Film Festival, and launched the MDC Museum of Art and Design, among many other milestones.

J.W.: Why should Caribbean or Caribbean descent students go to MDC?

E.P.: MDC is very popular with

Caribbean students, as evidenced by the number of students of Caribbean descent who study here. In regard to the population of Caribbean-citizen students, in the fall of 2012 we had nearly 20,000 students of Caribbean citizenship. Many of these students are from Cuba and Haiti, but we also have significant numbers from the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Puerto Rico, and The Bahamas, among others.

MDC is a place where Caribbean students, born in the U.S. or abroad, can feel at home. I am from the Caribbean and the region's energy and culture thrive at MDC.

J.W.: MDC North Campus has become a strong hub of activity for Caribbean matters, do you know why?

E.P.: We really have a large representation of Caribbean students at all of our campuses, but speaking specifically of Caribbean activity at North Campus, we have several Caribbean student organizations. Tropical Beat recently celebrated its 10th anniversary.

This organization seeks to unify students at North Campus in order to attend to the concerns of students of Caribbean descent, provides a medium of interaction between Caribbean students at North Campus and beyond, and educates students of non-Caribbean descent.

North Campus also has the Haitian IBO student association, among others. Plus, the leader of the North Campus is Jamaican American, Ms. Malou Harrison who serves as its president.

J.W.: What are some policies and initiatives that you wish to see at MDC over the next few years?

E.P.: Increasing college completion rates is certainly at the top of the list for the near future. That priority opens onto several realms that include partnerships across emerging industries, the use of new technology, funding approaches and the future role of faculty in ensuring effective teaching and learning.

J.W.: As the Caribbean Today reaches 25 years serving South Florida, especially the Caribbean and Caribbean loving communities, what opportunities do you creatively see MDC and Caribbean Today collaborating on?

E.P.: We will continue using the quality newspaper that is Caribbean Today and its able publisher and MDC Hall of Fame graduate Mr. Peter Webley as vehicles to reach the important Caribbean community with the opportunities Miami Dade College offers. We thank Caribbean Today for its loyal support of the college.



JTB's Donnie Dawson wants you to 'Get All Right' in Jamaica

MICHELLE CAWLEY DRESERIS

Lie back on a warm, white sand Jamaican beach, partially surrounded by beautiful blue-green mountains, as you bite into juicy and delicious – yes, spicy – Scotch Bonnet-laced Jamaican jerk chicken and lobster tails grilled in organic seasonings. Listen to the beat of rolling reggae music and feel the waves lapping your feet.

Add a serving of rice and peas, slices of breadfruit, sweet fried plantains and your favorite Jamaican rum or beer libation, and you will be feeling alright!

That means feeling great. You're relaxed. No problems. Everything is all right.

That's the new message Jamaica's Donald "Donnie" Dawson, 62, the deputy director of tourism, sales/USA and Latin America for the Jamaica Tourist Board's (JTB's) Miami office, wants visitors – and Jamaicans in the diaspora – to embrace.

The JTB was founded in

1955, seven years before Jamaica's Independence from Great Britain in 1962. Funded by the government, the JTB is the national tourism agency. JTB offices are located in Kingston, Montego Bay, Miami, Toronto and London, with satellite locations around the world.

MISSION

"Our mission is to develop and market Jamaica's tourist industry worldwide as a premier Caribbean tourist destination," said Dawson, who has worked for the JTB some 30 years. "We are a very dynamic organization and a body of Jamaica's Ministry of Tourism."

At last month's World Travel Market in London, Jamaica's Minister of Tourism Dr. Wykeham McNeil launched the new "Jamaica – Get All Right" campaign.

"On www.getallrightjamaica.com, you can learn about Jamaican culture, make hotel and flight reservations, book tours or golf games, or you can

take that info to your travel agent, and they can book your vacation," said Dawson.

"The new concept is that there's an engineer on a musical mixing board, in the mountains of Jamaica, who is directing the winds, the beats, the sounds and the fire of Jamaica!" he said.

"We are also developing tourist markets in Latin America, and have frequent flights through Panama, to Jamaica. This market has almost doubled in 2013."

SURPRISE

In a surprise move on Nov. 12, the JTB brought the world's largest, yellow smiley-faced stress ball to Times Square, New York to introduce the new campaign.

"We asked New Yorkers to squeeze our 24-foot stress ball, and release their worries. We want them to visit Jamaica, and 'Get All Right'," said Dawson.

"Nearly 70 percent of tourist arrivals to Jamaica come from the USA. Of those, 38 percent are travelers from the



Dawson

Northeast Corridor: From Boston to Baltimore.

"Our Jamaican diaspora of more than three million people overseas is very important to us. We invite them home to celebrate Jamaican vacations, weddings and family reunions."

The majority of Jamaicans live in the northeast corridor, South Florida and Toronto, he added.

Dawson is the "face" of the JTB in two of the

TravelChannel.com's cable shows about Jamaica. The JTB's "Meet the People" program also connects visitors to the island – for free – with Jamaican host families who have similar interests.

"Jamaica is a very beautiful, interesting and entertaining destination," said Dawson.

"Different migrant cultures have made Jamaica their home for generations: the Spanish, British, Africans, Chinese, Indians, Jews, Lebanese, and others. They have blended into Jamaican people," he said.

"That's why our motto is 'Out of Many, One People'. And, we are very proud of that!"

The choices for fun in Jamaica are warm, delicious, exotic, beautiful, exciting and unlimited.

Story and photograph by Michelle Cawley Dreseris, a freelance writer for Caribbean Today.





CARIBBEAN TODAY

25th Anniversary Celebration

Food For The Poor's culture of prayer offers hope for needy

DAWN A. DAVIS

A culture of prayer is what bolsters Food For The Poor (FFP). Prayer is what motivates its leadership and staff to work through daunting bureaucracy, natural disasters, external skepticism, and plain old personal struggles to help the poor in countries that many ignore.

It's no longer trendy to feed the poor in Haiti, Jamaica, or Nicaragua. Late night television used to be flooded with infomercials seeking help and donations for the poor across the world. Not so much anymore. That's old news. But FFP President and Chief Executive Officer Robin Mahfood and his staff are committed to their spiritual and altruistic calling.

"The Food For The Poor culture is one of community and prayer," Mahfood explained. "Each day, for half an hour, employees have an opportunity to gather and pray for the poor they serve, donors and the staff."

Although the non-profit organization is based on Christian values and principles, staff members are not required to be participants in any particular religious faith as FFP embraces all who need, Mahfood added.

Founded in 1982 by Ferdinand and Patti Mahfood, FFP grew out of the desire to serve the needy in Jamaica. The original headquarters still stands and is a bustling hub of activity for what is now the largest charity organization in Jamaica. The Coconut Creek, Florida campus has become the largest international relief and development organization in the United States.

LINK

Standing by its motto "Saving Lives, Transforming Communities, Renewing Hope", FFP has built thousands of

homes, fed the hungry, provided disaster relief, planted trees and helped renew hope and faith in many countries. This spirit has made the charity organization 'champions for the poor'.

"Food For The Poor's mission is to link the church of the First World with the church of the Third World in a manner that helps both the materially poor and the poor in spirit," said Mahfood.

"Our ministry is shaped by the belief that Christ is alive and can be served directly by serving those in greatest need. Ultimately, we seek to bring both benefactors and recipients to a closer union with our Lord."

FFP is also proud of its Jamaican roots and reaches out to the Jamaican and wider Caribbean community in South Florida. One of its most popular fundraising events, that attracts many from the region, is the annual 5K Walk-Fun for Hunger, which usually features a celebrity athlete. This year, elite Jamaican sprinter Yohan Blake came out to support the charity event. Blake also led the race last year, where more than 1,000 participants ran to raise money for the poor.

FUNDRAISING

The wider community is also familiar with FFP's charity work through other events, such as gala fundraising dinners and art exhibitions that, at times, showcase celebrities that help heighten awareness. Philanthropists Donald and Melania Trump are scheduled to join Patrick Park, Arlette Gordon and Elizabeth Bowden as the 2014 Fine Wines & Hidden Treasures Gala chairmen on Jan. 23, 2014 at The Mar-a-Lago Club in Palm Beach, Florida.

In addition, for the first time, FFP and Lighthouse Interiors have partnered with



Mahfood, right, is joined by Blake, center, and former Jamaica Consul General to Miami Sandra Grant Griffiths.

some of South Florida's top designers to showcase a Lighthouse Point home Jan. 16-19. Proceeds from the event are earmarked to build FFP homes in Haiti.

South Florida local charities also benefit from FFP's benevolence. Donations have been made to the Palm Beach Food Bank. Support has also been received by other organizations, including Big Mama's Team of Life, Inc., Chris Evert Children's Hospital, New Hope Charities, The Center for Family Services of Palm Beach County, Blessings Food Pantry, The Lord's Place, The Palm Beach County Food Bank, The Salvation Army shelter, Women in Distress, and United Overcome Church.

MISSION

FFP's core mission has been and will continue to be international assistance, according to Mahfood, who explained that Guatemala, Nicaragua, Jamaica and Haiti have received the

most aid.

"Many are surprised to learn that Guatemala has a poverty rate of more than 50 percent and the chronic malnutrition rate is the highest in the Western Hemisphere," he said.

"One form of malnutrition is caused from the scarcity of nutrients, which is common in a diet that relies mainly on starch. It is common for desperate mothers to only have corn tortillas and salt to offer their children. ... Another form of malnutrition is caused by food scarcity. Some children may go days without eating, while parents struggle to find food."

Added Mahfood: "The world will never forget the horrific images from Haiti after the devastating earthquake of January 12, 2010. Food For The Poor immediately responded by shipping and distributing food, water and medical supplies. By the end of the same year, the organization had sent 1,465 tractor-trailer loads of food, water,

medicines and other lifesaving relief aid valued at more than \$188 million to Haiti."

The need is staggering and natural disasters are commonplace. So, who gives to FFP? The majority of donors, said Mahfood, live in the U.S. and come from all walks of life. The charity also offers mission trips for those who want to see, feed and touch those they are helping.

"It is an opportunity to be the hands and feet of Jesus to people in need," he explained. "This service may be the building of houses, the feeding of the hungry, the care of children and other activities that will bring love and hope to those who desperately need it. ... God is in control. We see his hand in what we do every day," Mahfood added.

Dawn A. Davis is a freelance writer for Caribbean Today.



SUCCESS SECRET: Carmen Bartlett's philosophy guides JN in Florida

JUDITH HUDSON

"Stay true to self, good spirited and perform your duties to the highest level." That's the sound advice Carmen Bartlett gives to her staff at Jamaica National Money Services (JN).

Given how many businesses are failing today, there is always something to be learned from those that succeed. JN is still going strong after 16 years. The formula: Provide high quality service and customers will always want to do business.

Of course, formulas are eas-

ily stated, but not so easily endorsed. Bartlett, is the operation manager for JN based in Miami. She manages five JN branches and over 30 agents.

IMPACT

Born in Westmoreland Jamaica, Bartlett came to the United States in 1997 as a representative of JN. Back then, she explained, the company started out small, but used its size to its advantage. Bartlett said that she knew that the company would not stay small for long and being small enabled JN to provide an



Bartlett

unusually high level of access to its clients. Communication

between customers and JN's team rivals all other money transfer companies.

Bartlett said JN is more than a money transfer business. It also offers a range of other services, including Bill Pay, transfers to accounts at banks in Jamaica, mortgage payments, National Housing Trust contributions, payment of land taxes and JN Top -up to mobile phones. She sees JN as a home away from home.

"I have spent all my working years with this awesome company," Bartlett explained.

"It cares for its employees and is poised as good corporate company."

"(We) have many outreach programs and the one (that) comes readily to mind is Jamaica Partnership for Education. Its involvement in sports, community outreach programs and sponsorship of events.

"JN is a household name and its brand is very strong" Bartlett said.

Judith Hudson is a freelance writer for Caribbean Today.



CELEBRATING 25 Years CARIBBEAN TODAY 25th Anniversary Celebration

THERAPY: Dr. Fidel Goldson takes pride in listening to patients' needs

JUDITH HUDSON

Every patient has a story that seems to come with their illness, and Dr. Fidel Goldson, Jr. takes pride that he and his staff are always ready to listen.

According to Dr. Goldson, that is what makes Goldson Spine Rehabilitation Center, located in Plantation, Florida, different from other chiropractic and physical therapy offices in the country.

"We don't hurry our patients off," he said. "We sit and listen to what they have to say. We establish a relationship."

Dr. Goldson said his practice aims to make patients feel they are more than a number and a part of the Goldson family. He is a second generation chiropractor and physical therapist. When he was growing up, he spent a lot of time with his father and grandparents. It's perhaps where he acquired his skills in listening and patience. They also instilled in him the reward that comes from working and doing what gives him the most pleasure.



Dr. Goldson

EARLY START

"I started working when I was in middle school," said Dr. Goldson. "My mother got me a job at a corner store in Lauderhill (Florida) where I worked in the evenings after school for two hours."

He recalled how gratifying it was.

"I made five dollars a day," said Dr. Goldson. "I saved my money and bought my first Nintendo."

He said the greatest pleasure from that experience was to see the proud look on his father's face. As he grew older,

he knew he wanted to see that look for a long time from Dr. Fidel Goldson, Sr., who was also a chiropractor and physical therapist. He owned his own office, so junior knew that he wanted to assume his father's role.

ROAD

The road to success was hard work. Dr. Goldson said he worked at nights as a security guard while pursuing his education. When he finished college in 1999, he immediately joined the family practice, working alongside his father, who continues to motivate him.

Dr. Goldson has been married for 14 years. The father of three said that his 15-year-old daughter also wants to be a physical therapist, further establishing the Goldson legacy. When asked if there are any setbacks since taking over the family business, Golden paused and said: "The only setback I faced, if you would call it a setback, was when I went to an advisor and told him I wanted to be a physical therapist. I believed he tried to discourage me by saying 'you know that program is very

challenging. Maybe you should consider being a physical therapist assistant'."

Goldson laughed. He said his father was told the same thing by an advisor. The doctor thanks his parents and his grandparents for his success. He also believes divine intervention plays a part in his success.

"We see God in everything that we do," said Dr. Goldson. "We pray in the mornings when we come in. We keep a bible

outside on the table. We put God first, and that passes down to our patients."

Dr. Goldson has another office in Pembroke Pines, Florida. He would like to open two more to further serve his community.

Judith Hudson is a freelance writer for Caribbean Today.



If it's Caribbean arts, culture, it's Sydney Roberts's time

The name Sydney Roberts is synonymous with anything related to culture and the arts particularly in and around South Florida.

Roberts, a graduate of the University of Technology and the University of the West Indies, has, over the years made his mark as a promoter of Caribbean festivities, including the well known jerk festival. Thirteen years ago, the Jamaican Jerk Festival came into being in Pembroke Pines, Florida. Today the festival, which first attracted 4,000 patrons, now caters to over 17,000.

As one of the festival's co-founders, it has undoubtedly become one of his passions. Roberts's hard work has paid off and, as a result, the accolades are many. In 1999 he received the Black Heritage Pillars Award from the Dade County Black Employees Association. In 2004, the Award of Excellence from Miami Carnival Inc.; in 2006, the Jamaica USA



Roberts

Chamber of Commerce's Milestone Award of Excellence; and in 2007 he was recognized with the Community Service Award, presented by the then Governor General of Jamaica Kenneth Hall.

For Roberts, the work has not been in vain and he continues to set standards promoting the culture of his homeland while maintaining and protecting its authenticity.



Caribbean's welfare drives Victor Vargas's simple dream

JUDITH HUDSON

Personal goals aside, Victor Vargas has a simple dream for the future, and the welfare of a region is at the center of it.

"For all Caribbean countries to work for the benefit of the regions instead of just one island or nation," Vargas told Caribbean Today recently.

"The English and Spanish speaking Caribbean should work closer together."

Vargas, the vice president of sales and marketing at Seafreight Line in Doral, Florida, has made his own contributions to make that dream a reality. His commitment to the American and Caribbean communities earned him the Jamaica Milestone Award for International Trade from the Jamaica/USA Chamber of Commerce. He understands the obstacles, but banks on his personal motto to overcome them.

"There is no victory without a challenge," said the 45-year-old. "I am going to make it."

FAMILY PUSH

Vargas was born in Chicago, Illinois. He grew up in Hialeah, Florida. From an early age his parents stressed the importance of education. Vargas attended Florida International University,

graduating with a double major in marketing and international business.

Yet his parents also underlined the importance of putting family first and to always love what he does, "because," Vargas said, "money isn't everything."

He met his wife when he was only 14. The father of three said he wears multiple hats and pitches in with even the most routine duties at Seafreight Lines.

"I love the industry and what I do," Vargas said, "so I tend to get involved in everything that can make a positive influence at Seafreight. If I need to drive the truck or navigate the ship to deliver service, then that's what I'll do."

COMPANY CORE

The freight company has three other office locations, Orlando and Jacksonville in Florida, and Atlanta, Georgia. It ships to 18 countries, including Jamaica and Haiti, and handles containers ranging from 20 feet to 45 feet, which carry a variety of cargo, such as trucks, cars and road building equipment.

Before his current post, Vargas worked 13 years at Maersk Line/A.P. Moller Companies in various capacities involving commercial trades.



Vargas

When he's not working, Vargas spends most of his time with his seven-year old son David, attending football, soccer and swim team practices. He also has a 17-year-old daughter Danielle, a high school senior.

"She always has a musical performance we need to attend," he said. "She plays the French horn."

Still, Vargas finds time for himself too. He's also a cyclist and rides with various groups in Broward County, including GalizCyclin, South Broward Wheelers and ZMotion.

"I try to ride about 120 miles weekly, but average about 90 miles weekly," said Vargas.

Judith Hudson is a freelance writer for Caribbean Today.



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Caribbean Today 25th Anniversary Celebration

Jacques Laroche: UCOMB's driving force to better minority businesses

**MICHELLE CAWLEY
DRESERIS**

Estate Laroche – with its comfortable two-story mansion – sprawls beautifully on a private compound in southwest Miami-Dade's upscale Cutler Bay area. A circular driveway invites guests past Jacques and Yvette Laroche's fountain and up the steps into the elegant home they have designed, built and decorated.

"Welcome to my home," said Jacques, with his lilting French creole accent.

The walls of Laroche's office and his desk are neatly organized with a wealth of business and community awards, each recognizing his creative, altruistic, political and mentoring work in Miami-Dade for nearly 30 years. A self-made man, a devoted and loving husband and father, Laroche dedicates his creative energies, business acumen and resources to passionately promoting small businesses and his community through the

Unique Coalition of Minority Businesses of South Dade, Inc., a concept he conceived and developed.

Behind the home lies an expansive pool area, designed for entertaining large groups of friends and hosting fundraising events for their favorite organizations. The pool is wrapped by a manicured garden that displays Laroche's exterior art gallery and paintings.

"I was born an artist," said Laroche. "That is a gift I received from the Lord."

Past the pool is a small house with inviting, white rocking chairs on the porch.

"This is my 'man cave'," said Laroche.

BACKGROUND

The rocking chairs alert guests to the relaxation destination he has designed within. An artist, interior designer and entrepreneur, Laroche has worked to build the expansive estate. Somewhere – on the other side of life – Laroche's



Laroche

deceased father must be kicking himself, regretting the times in Cap Haitien, Haiti, when he abandoned Jacques, and told his son "You will never succeed."

"In 1973, at age 21, I told my father, 'I am not on the same financial level with you now, but I will be'," Laroche said.

He has surpassed his late father, a successful doctor in

Haiti.

"Sometimes, God works in mysterious ways," said Laroche. "He motivated me to succeed, and to give back what I did not receive from him."

Laroche credited Max K. Cantave, his school principal Lycee de Petion-ville High in Haiti, for changing his life.

"Max was the father I never had," he explained. "He was my role model of what a

father – and a man – should be. The man I am today is because of him. I call him my 'motivational, and adopted father'.

"Max was a kind, great and brilliant man, a powerful speaker and a community leader who helped many people," added Laroche, who keeps a photograph of Cantave in his office. "He taught me almost everything I know today."

"Max used his small salary to open a music school inside our high school, because the government did not support music classes. He got us two teachers, and instruments – using his own money – and he helped everyone in our community."

INFLUENCE

Laroche taught history and French at the school after he graduated in 1970. Cantave, who died some years ago, was then his boss and became his friend through life.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 19B)

Laparkan: A fitting example of Caribbean American character

When United States President Barack Obama speaks of the tenacity and perseverance of Caribbean Americans – whose achievements have shaped every aspect of American society, including spurring the U.S. economy as intrepid entrepreneurs – the name Glen Khan serves as indisputable testimony to the Caribbean American personality and character to which the president refers.

The story of Khan reflects the fundamental American idea that when access to opportunity is equal, anyone can make it if they try hard enough.

Over the past 30 years, Khan has successfully piloted the diversified activities of the Laparkan Group of Companies with its range of services, which include ocean shipping, air cargo, manufacturing, retail trade, money transfer and travel. Today, Laparkan's freight operations – Laparkan Shipping – is the single largest employer of Caribbean Americans in the diaspora.

Just over three decades ago, Khan, along with two friends, John LaRose and Terrence Pariag, set up Laparkan Trading after recognizing the need to provide West Indians with a reliable channel to send supplies, gifts

and other personal effects back home to their families in the Caribbean. In 1983, Laparkan opened its doors in Toronto, Canada and was an instant success. Word quickly spread and within 12 months fully functional Laparkan offices and warehouses were set up in New York, Miami, London and Georgetown, Guyana.

What began as a simple personal effects shipping enterprise has grown under Khan's leadership, into the dynamic, multi-national and multi-service operation that is today the Laparkan Group of Companies. Laparkan is now solely owned by Khan, who oversees its daily operations.

VISIONARY

Born in Guyana, Khan is a truly Caribbean man who must be counted among the region's most insightful, visionary and successful entrepreneurs in post-colonial Caribbean society. He has received several awards and honors for his contribution to the development of Caribbean society in the post-Independence era. They have come from various Caribbean governments, organizations in the region and diaspora, and from city and county governments in the U.S.

Asked what has been



Khan

responsible for his and Laparkan's success, Khan said "a strong belief in the good of people and a commitment to honesty, fairness and hard work."

This simple, easily approachable executive has also become well known and respected for his philanthropy. A major reason for Laparkan's success is that the company is a good corporate citizen, giving back to the communities it serves through support for education, health, sport, youth development, preservation and promotion of Caribbean culture, disaster relief and the work of religious bodies.

In recent years, Laparkan has contributed significantly to relief efforts following a major flood in Guyana, hurricanes in several Caribbean islands, including Jamaica and

the devastating earthquake in Haiti. Laparkan was honored by the Americas Relief Team (ART) for its pivotal role in helping to ensure the efficient and timely dispatch of critical relief supplies to Haiti following the earthquake.

Today, a section of the company's new state-of-the-art 166,000 square foot warehouse has been designated, free of cost, as a disaster emergency relief center from which urgently needed relief material can be dispatched in the event of a natural disaster anywhere in the Americas, including Florida.

CHARACTER

A fitting example of the Caribbean American personality and character is Laparkan Shipping. Founded in 1983, it has offered service to the people of the Caribbean diaspora and the region. Laparkan has shipped personal effects and commercial cargo to the Caribbean both by air and ocean. Its money transfer service and Internet shopping continue to be pivotal to the social stability and economic development of several Caribbean countries.

It has also spurred the U.S. economy through employment of some 400 Caribbean Americans, at

warehouses and offices in New York, New Jersey, Florida and Georgia, and engaging scores of agents across the U.S. The company's corporate office is in Miami where its main warehouse serves as a hub for cargo being shipped around the world.

"Laparkan was the pioneer of the barrel business to the Caribbean," said Godfrey Harding, a Brooklyn resident who recalled shipping his first barrel to Kingston, Jamaica.

"Laparkan has developed beyond the barrel business and is today the number one logistics solutions provider serving the Caribbean region – hence its motto: Connecting the Caribbean Globally," said Khan.

Speaking at the official opening of Laparkan's new Stanley Avenue facility last June, Trinidad and Tobago Consul General Nan Ramgoolam said Laparkan is true testimony that Caribbean-owned businesses perform as well as those considered the best in the world.

Laparkan is also true testimony to the intrepid entrepreneurship of Caribbean Americans and the national character to which Obama referred.



Caribbean Today 25th Anniversary Celebration

Jacques Laroche: UCOMB's driving force to better minority businesses

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 18B)

Laroche credited his successful life to Cantave's influence and Yvette, his wife and business partner. His mother's love and wisdom, and his grandmother's, and "auntie's" love and support, gave him guidance and strength.

"Yvette is the love of my life," said Laroche. "I knew it the moment I saw her."

But there was always another constant.

"Art always stays in me," said Laroche.

"In Montreal, we opened a store and a manufacturing plant. We designed and manufactured window treatments, and were very successful interior designers."

In 1984, the Laroche's moved to Miami and opened Unique Home Design, Inc., a lucrative interior design business from which they are now, essentially, retired.

"There was a lack of cooperation among the local businesses here, and no support for new and minority businesses in our area," said Laroche. "I decided that change was necessary."

In 2000, he established a quarterly business after-hours networking forum." The success of those led to the formation of the Unique Coalition of Minority Businesses of South Dade, Inc. (UCOMB), a non-profit organization. UCOMB has become the most diverse networking minority group in South Dade's history, with more than 300 members from 27 countries. The organization has remained on the cutting edge of its mission as a leading proactive service network, focusing on issues that affect small and minority businesses.

"I am retired, but I work almost full-time giving back to my community through UCOMB," said Laroche.

MISSION

UCOMB's mission includes providing networking opportunities, workshops and seminars, promoting minority-owned businesses, award banquets to recognize the best minority-owned business in the community, internship programs for minority youths for minority-owned businesses, scholarships free educational programs.

In many ways, UCOMB is an extension of Laroche's drive to give to the world what he did not receive from his father and to return those emotional and financial resources he has received.

"My mom believed in me and motivated me," Laroche recalled. "She told me, 'Jacques, I am not worried

about you, because I know you will make it in life'."

His mother died in Montreal about seven years ago.

"Mom said, 'Jacques, on your way into this world, you picked the genes of that smart man, and you will be smarter than him,'" he said.

Her words seem prophetic.

"I always remember who I am, and where I came from," said Laroche.

"Even though I do not have the taste of poverty in my mouth now, I still feel it. I still see it. And, I still remember," he said.

"My mission – to make a difference in this world – is not finished."

Photograph and story by Michelle Cawley Dreseris, a freelance writer for Caribbean Today.



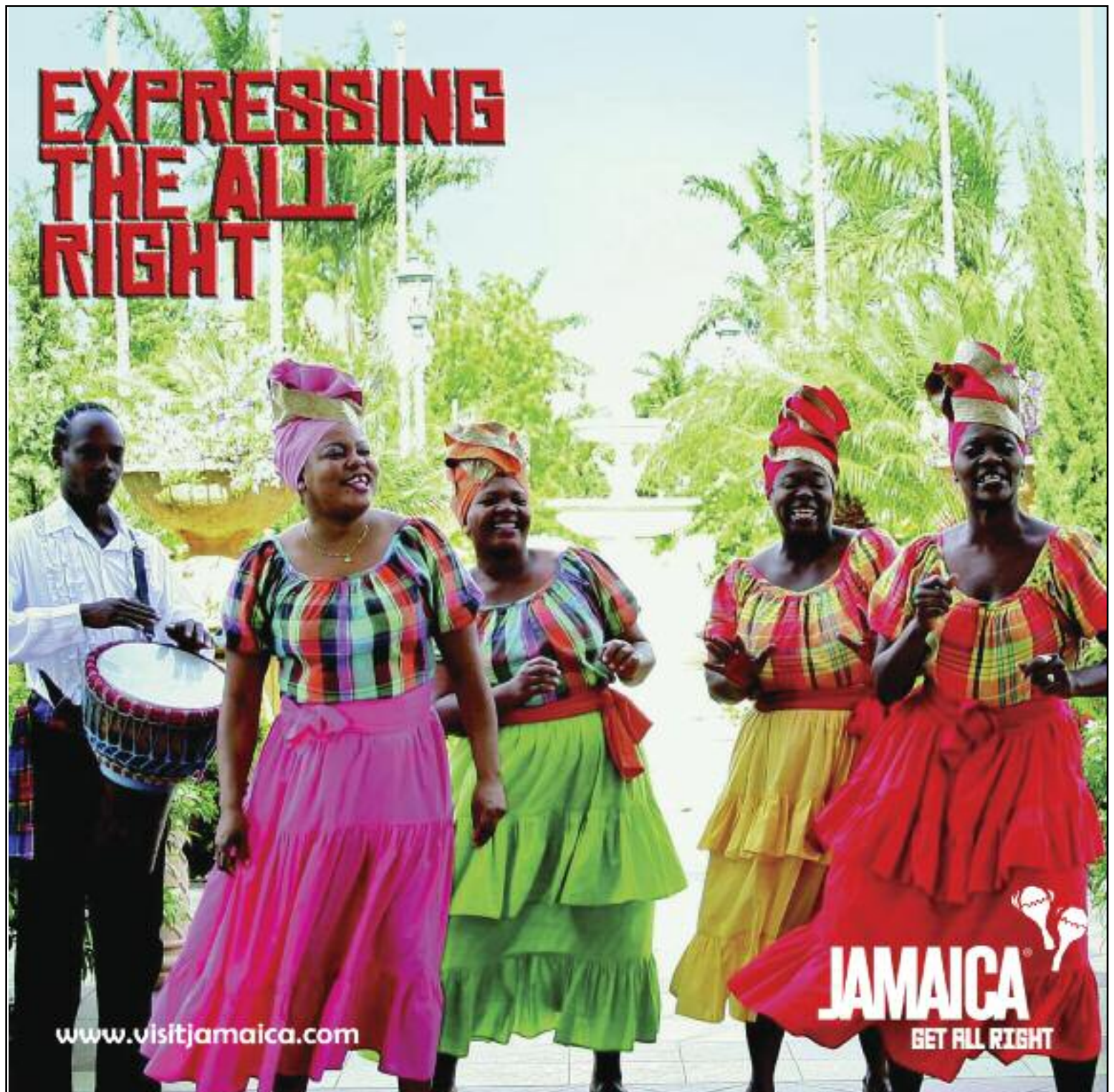
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