

Flanker Resource Centre

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St. James

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The Flanker Resource Centre is a non-profit Organization which was developed out of the Community Development Committee which was initiated through the Social Development Commission. It seeks to enhance the economic, educational and social development of the Community which will by extension improve the citizens self esteem and community pride. The Centre houses the Peace and Justice Centre which conducts mediations and other Alternative Dispute Resolution activities and is affiliated to the Dispute Resolution Foundation.

The Flanker Community is inclusive of Flanker Proper, Providence Heights, Seaview Heights and Providence heights Housing Scheme and has over 10,000 residents, with sixty percent of the population below the age of 30. Current estimates show that almost half of this group is undereducated and unemployable. Some of the other problems facing the community are: Poor parenting, Teenage pregnancy and low self esteem. It is because of this crisis that the Centre operates its many programs that are specifically targeted to reduce the problems identified. These programs include: Mediation Services, a homework assistance program, adult education night classes (remedial and CXC), Computer classes, a skills training program, a parent education program, job search assistance, a welfare program, a youth-at-risk programme, a Marching Band, a Youth club, Senior Citizens Club, Flanker Folks Cultural Group, Flanker Performance and Creative Arts group, domino club, the Youth Crime Watch Initiative and our sports programme. We feel that by giving the community a positive environment and plentiful resources they will have a more positive future.

The mediation programme has seen 140 persons in the community being trained as community mediators through a CIDA sponsored project- Social Conflict and legal reform Project, sixteen (16) through a JSIF sponsored programme and 10 through the Peace Management Initiative. To date ten are qualified to facilitate court appointed mediations. The introduction of mediation into the community has reduced the number of disputes that are reported to the police and which end up in the court system. One day each week is designated as Youth Mediation Day where young people can come in and have their disputes resolved by their peers. Adult mediations are scheduled at the parties' convenience to accommodate their work schedules. Most cases that are facilitated at the centre are walk-in but there are also some cases which are referred by the Police and the Courts. This programme has helped with the unification of the community in various ways which have enhanced its development.

Currently the Centre has a **Home Work Club** which focuses on Life Skills education - which is inclusive of conflict management, anger management, healthy lifestyle, making

choices and decision making-, healthy recreation, arts and crafts and academic tutoring as well as computer studies. Overall this program strives to give Flanker youth an opportunity to be creative and learn how to channel energy and knowledge into a positive direction. This club operates in two sessions each day to facilitate the two shifts at Flanker Primary & Junior High School. It has forty (40) students registered who attend on a regular basis. Through this programme we have initiated a Summer school which focuses on reading and literacy and a Summer camp which has been facilitated for the past three years. The first year we catered to 130 youngsters up to age nineteen (19) and the other two years we hosted 150. This programme along with our Back-to-school Extravaganza which was attended by over four hundred (400) youngsters - is a motivational day that promotes reading and youth performances as well as scholarship awards - is our annual highlight which the children look forward to attending and was sponsored this year by CSJP.

There is also a **Community Youth Club** which is the umbrella organization for a number of youth initiatives that serves to enhance the development of Flanker youth. They are: *The Marching Band* which also aims to give youth a new outlet for positive expression. There are presently 30 instruments available and we are currently seeking avenues to get additional instruments both for the marching band and also for a concert band. The Band has sixty (60) students that practice twice weekly; this group focuses on learning music theory as well as the instrument. Like all other programmes in the Centre, Life Skills are a part of their training. A cheerleading group has started to enhance the Band. The age range of the band is from 7 years old and over.

Peer Mediators were trained to be active in peer conflicts and training. This programme has helped the young people involved to raise their self-esteem and to see themselves as valuable members of the Community. To date twenty (20) persons have been trained in this programme. This group is being used as the standard bearers for the centre to encourage other youth into positive development.

A Performance and Creative Arts Group has been established to facilitate the artistic and cultural expression of the youngsters. This group has drawn male and female participants who are engaged in drama, speech, contemporary, cultural, African and Jamaican dance as well as a choir. A gold and silver medal have been attained in the 2009 in JCDC dance festivals. There are five dances and one poetry piece which have been successful in making the parish finals for 2010.

The Youth Crime Watch of Flanker is also under the auspices of the Youth Club. This group includes those who show leadership abilities and are able to deliberate on the root causes of crime in the community, who is involved and how to deter youngsters from getting involved in crime and violence. They are also the group that will be looked on to begin our succession program of community leaders. They are affiliated with the Youth Crime Watch of America and will be involved in collaborative activities with this organization. They have taken the responsibility of doing the community archiving and the writing of the community's history. They were also responsible for facilitating the Community Challenge Quiz competition which included teams from all the streets in the

community. The quiz was based mainly on community history, development and activities. They initiated the Peace Wall project which saw community members writing on the wall their sentiments to the commitment of peace in the community. Their next two initiatives will be a debate competition and the publishing of the Flanker Digest our local newsletter.

The sports programme is organized to encourage adolescents and young adults to become involved with the Centre's activities. Sports has definitely been the catalyst for this endeavour. We presently have an under thirteen, under fifteen, under seventeen, Division Two and master league football teams; teams that participate in competitions facilitated by the St. James Football Association. A Netball team plays in the community corner league and the SDC League. A track and field team has also been formed which took part in the SDC Games where two silver medals were won and a junior and senior Dominoe team is also a part of the program. The senior team plays in a league organized by the Cornwall Courts community. The senior team engages the fathers in the Centre which extension allows closer interaction with their children. These teams are been managed in a holistic fashion to ensure that their behaviour is representative of the Centre's values and attitudes. Our disciplinary body is active and strong and will seek to chastise and place penalties on the smallest indiscretions. They are also involved in life skills training as was mentioned before. This programme has started to bear fruit as it is evident the improvement of the participants' behaviour and demeanor in the community as their self esteem and self worth is raised in their own eyes. Basketball, baby cricket, tennis and badminton will be introduced this year at the community's request.

Youth at Risk programme was initiated to assist boys and girls who were out of school for whatever reason. The high schools in the area were asked that students who were suspended should be sent into our custody for the duration of the suspension so that interventions could be done. This programme includes life skills, counseling, and therapy remedial classes and regular curriculum tutoring. The aim is to get them up to par academically and socially to be reintegrated into the school system.

The Skills training program with Sandals Montego Bay known as S.T.A.R.T. (Sandals/Flanker Training and Recruitment Tier) facilitates 25 youth per session in various areas of the hospitality Industry. It is a H.E.A.R.T. certified program which allows the recipients to receive a Certificate and recommendation at the end of the training. This has empowered them in making them more marketable. To date fifty (50) persons have graduated from this programme and all are employed whether by Sandals or other similar organizations. They also have the option of going on the overseas hotel programmes with their new qualification. There is another batch of fifteen who are now being assessed for graduation. All reports have been positive coming from the hotel. Since this programme, 4 are supervisors, 1 wine connoisseur, 2 certified life guards, three masseuses and 4 on overseas programme. The others are all employed. We have started Data Applications Level One and will be introducing food preparation, food and beverage and housekeeping to ensure more persons are prepared for the job opportunities coming on stream.

The Senior Citizens meet once per week where resource persons are brought in to give information and services to them. They are also given a hot meal and an occasional grocery bag which is provided by Food for the Poor. The club is affiliated to the St. James Senior Citizens Association which operates out of the Ministry of Social Security and Labour. This allows them to take part in the parish events such as Health Days, Cultural Activities, Sports Days, Field trips, etc. The Stove to prepare the meals was donated by First Caribbean Bank. They have been involved in art and craft activities and were able to make corsages for one of the graduations in the community. Their craft items are presently being assessed by the parish body for certificates to be awarded. This programme has helped in bringing the seniors back to life and in seeing their own self worth. They are an integral component in our programs as they are able to interact with the youngsters and share their experiences with them.

The Community Library provides research as well as non-fiction books and computer services for the community. This allows the schools to get more homework from the students who utilize the centre and this includes primary, high school and tertiary students. There is a continuous book drive to enhance and widen the type of books available in the library. Students are encouraged to come in and do their S.B.A.s as well as projects as all the facilities are readily available. The centre also has volunteers who will assist high school students with their homework assignments and in finding information in the library.

The Remedial Classes which are offered by the Centre have five levels which range from Pre-School to Grade nine and at present have over seventy (70) students enrolled. The classes include Mathematics, English, Computer Studies and Real Life Studies. Some of the higher levels will be preparing for the HEART NCT VET Level One in Computer Studies which will allow them to leave the remedial school with an accredited Certificate. The much valued computer lab was donated and is still supported by Cable and Wireless Foundation. At the end of the remedial school, the students have the option of continuing on to the CXC Classes or to a HEART program as they are now qualified to pass the entry test. The Centre presently offers CXC classes in Mathematics, English Language and Principles of Business. The student compliment is approximately 25. The results of those person who sat the examinations in May have been very encouraging as most have been successful in their results. Most of the students are young adults and parents who want the improvement both for themselves and to help their children with homework.

Welfare Day provides clothing and food items for those who are in need in the community. We have a continuous drive to collect used and new clothing of all sizes, shoes, baby accessories, household items and anything that can assist the needy. We also register person with larger needs than the Centre can assist with, but we try to find the resource persons or agencies that can assist them.

We are presently making plans for the possibility of a cottage industry which will assist with sustaining the programs at the Centre. Some of the women are excited about us starting a bakery and the facilities are being prepared for this initiative. The inclusion of

HEART NTA for the community based training program will also give some financial relief. Clothing and textile training will also be offered out of one of the churches.

Our **parenting program** has two components, the seminars which will be extended to reach all the areas in the community and the home visit program. It is also our objective that all the youth programs have the involvement of the parents to boost the self esteem of the children as well as informing the parents of the activities and give them the opportunity to foster good relations with their children.

All the services are provided by volunteers from the community. We have added on to the Centre to facilitate the various programmes. This addition is however still not adequate and we need to consider expanding even further. The expansion has so far been constructed by community volunteers with donations from various sources. The Centre will continue to provide services that will uplift the community in whatever way possible. CSJP has kindly agreed to include us in their program and this new intervention will allow for all the new initiatives that will be introduced and enhance the current ones to reach more persons.

Funding for all the programmes is by way of continuous seeking of donations from all sources. The needs are great in the community and the programmes are many, but we have seen the positive impact that the community is reaping and therefore we are encouraged to persevere. Donations of cash, kind or time are always welcome to assist with our programmes.

In our plan for sustainability we have initiated a **Home Town Association** concept which is identifying persons from the community who presently reside overseas ie. USA, Canada and the United Kingdom. Contacts have been made and they are excited about getting together to raise funds for the community and give whatever assistance they can. We are getting some assistance from USAID-COMET project in making the necessary contacts and travel expenses to meet with these groups. An open invitation is offered to any one who wishes to visit and see the work first hand