

## VPA Launches ‘Creatives for Peace’ in Inner-City Communities

The Violence Prevention Alliance (VPA) has teamed up with Sistren Theatre Collective, Groots Jamaica, Island Coffees and peace ambassadors to launch ‘Creatives For Peace’, an initiative that will enable young people to become positive community influencers and role models for their peers and the young generation through the creative arts.

The initiative was launched on Thursday, February 24 at the Victoria Pier in Kingston. Creatives for Peace will facilitate a space where young talents can be showcased. These talents will be in the areas of hosting, dancing, singing poetry, drama and players of instruments. Professor Elizabeth Ward, chair of the VPA said that the initiative



**Valdon Vassell, aka 'Double V' performs a piece at the launch of 'Creatives For Peace'.**

was conceptualized to engage young people in a positive way through the arts.

“Over the last two years the pandemic has weighed heavily on us and even so for our young people. This initiative will harness the positive energy of our young people and tap

into their creativity to bring forth messages that can be used to influence others,” she explained.

The initiative targets - communities such as: Trench Town, Allman Town, Fletchers Land, Drewsland, Seaview Gardens in Kingston; in Portmore, St. Catherine the communities of Newland, Lime Tree and Lakes Pen. There are also plans to extend the initiative later on in Mount Salem, Montego Bay.

Young persons, ages 10 to 24 years old will be engaged under the initiative. Persons are invited to get involved by submitting their talent piece along with a brief personal information to Whatsapp at 876-261-4052 or email to [creatives4peace@gmail.com](mailto:creatives4peace@gmail.com).

## IUC Establishes Peace Institute and Extended Learning Centre

The International University of the Caribbean (IUC) officially established its Peace Institute and Extended Learning Centre, at the Spanish Court Hotel in Kingston on March 17.

The objectives of the IUC Peace Institute are to develop quality research methodologies; strengthen the peace resiliency of children and youth, women and men, families and communities; influence the shaping of public policies; respond to gender-based violence through research into family violence; address violence in the virtual communities, and build partnerships for peace.

“This Peace Institute is engaged in research, critical to the life of any university, in advocacy activities. We are seeking to build strong and peaceful communities. What a time for us to be launching when at a time our world is in crisis,” said Professor Roderick Hewitt President, IUC.

Professor Hewitt further noted that the Institute will be working with key



**Dr Deanna Ashley, Executive Director of the VPA**

partners and institutions to build credible values. One such partnership he said was with the VPA, which he said is of strategic importance.

“We need to network in this peace building, we can’t do it alone. Our connectivity with the church is vital because the church is front line peace builders in terms of the understanding of the

gospel,” he pointed out.

Dr Deanna Ashley, executive director of the VPA in bringing greetings commended the organisation for establishing the institute. “We welcome the opportunity to continue this collaboration with the IUC and the Peace Institute as you conduct research and train students in peace building by building capacity of students to implement interventions that will bring about positive changes in how our children and how others socialize and how people resolve disagreements,” she said. The VPA executive director said that the work from the Institute will assist in curbing the culture and epidemic of violence.

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## CARIMAN and PPC Launch Affirming Fatherhood Project

The Caribbean Male Action Network (CARIMAN) in collaboration with Parenting Partners Caribbean (PPC) will be implementing the 'Affirming Fatherhood' project, which will roll out a series of activities in recognition of Father's Day in June.

Owenn 'Blakka' Ellis, Senior Lecturer and Acting Head of Department for Arts Management and Humanities at the Edna Manley College of the Visual and Performing Arts and member of CARIMAN made the disclosure of some of these plans at the Violence Prevention Alliance Steering Committee Meeting, recently.

"The preliminary evaluation of PPC partners shows that there is a real need to effectively address interests and needs of fathers differently from mothers," he said noting that there



Owenn 'Blakka' Ellis of CARIMAN

have been work done by the Father's Incorporated among other groups to bring fathers to the fore.

"We recognize the need to do something significant, something large, something hopefully and impactful around father-

hood in the Caribbean. Hence the idea of the project, Affirming Fatherhood," he explained.

Mr Ellis said the project include activities that will range from webinars, symposia and media campaigns that would be done throughout the Caribbean

that encourage and facilitate a space for reflection on positive men who are present in their children's lives.

"There are number of homes where things are beautiful when daddy is home. They might not be the majority but

there are homes where when daddy is home, there is safety, there is comfort, love and compassion," he said pointing out if these are recognized it will encourage other men to do likewise.

He said the research show that where a positive father figure in the home, there is less likelihood of problematic behavior, entanglement with the law or violence in a child's like.

"That is the idea in affirming fatherhood, the idea that throughout the Caribbean, we can celebrate and encourage fatherhood," he said. Caribbean Male Action Network is a regional network of individuals and organisations in Caribbean region working on transforming masculinities and engaging men and boys to promote gender equality.

## Volunteerism Can Turn Around Lives, Says Paul Sully

Paul Sully, former country director of the US Peace Corp said that volunteerism can be impactful but requires training to get the best results especially if it involves cross culture volunteerism.

"When you are going to volunteer, you need training. Good intentions are not enough for you to get there. You need a conversation about expectations and what you can do to get you there," he pointed out.

Mr Sully made the recommendations while addressing the Violence Prevention Alliance Steering Committee meeting in February.

"There has to be training to be a volunteer as well as to receive a volunteer," he pointed out.

He also underscored the value of mentorship as part of the volunteering process where not only the mature person mentors but also the young person also pass on valuable experience to the mentee or older person.

The former director of the US Peace Corp noted that while volunteerism is at a cost more is achieved through volunteerism especially if programmes are designed to capitalize on the willingness of persons choosing to get involved in an activity. "When you monetized, you remove some essential part of



Paul Sully, former country director of the US Peace Corp

prevention aspect because (when you volunteer), I'm not pressuring you to be there, you have chosen to be there and that changes the equation and to me in a dramatic way. I have seen elements of this working positively with high risks youths where (they turned their life around)," he said.

He gave an example of situation where he was tasked to plan a

autonym. The idea of 'I chose to be there' for me plays into the violence

youth conference while he was stationed in Kenya. He utilized the open space technology where the youths get to decide how to express and organize themselves. He said 16 youth leaders were selected in the different communities and were trained prior to the conference. They were each assigned a mentor and encouraged to come up with projects that would improve their communities.

The outcome was positive as the young people came up with projects that ranged from social enterprises, educational programmes to environment and community development programmes. They were also encouraged to get 10 other persons in their communities involved.

## CRP at Boys Town and Red Hills Primary to Serve as Research and Practicum for University Students

The Child Resiliency Programme (CRP) at Boys Town and Red Hills Primary is to serve as community-based and in-school CRP models respectively for research and practicum learning assignments for university students. Dr Kim Scott, director of the CRP commended the collaboration and noted that this partnership will be beneficial for both institutions involved.

The CRP continued to be successful despite the challenges with the term culminating on March 29 to 30<sup>th</sup>.

Members of staff of the CRP were rewarded for their two years of hard and consistent work throughout the pandemic with a trip to Jewel Paradise Cove Resort in Runaway Bay in February with all persons present.



Members of staff take a group photo at the retreat held in February

The programme provides literacy support, life skills training (including spiritual development) to the students as well as creative and sporting activities to reinforce life skills training.

Parents and family members also benefitted from training, counseling and home visits for the families of the children referred. The children are also supported with nutritional needs.

The Child Resiliency Programme began in 2006 as an outreach programme of the Hope United Church, under the umbrella of the Hope Counselling and Wellness Centre. It seeks to meet the needs of pre-adolescents and build on their physical, social, cognitive, vocational and moral competencies as the most effective strategy for preventing multiple problems including violence. In 2014 the programme began operating out of the VPA.

## Peace Innovators Benefit From Capacity Peace Building

Some 20 representatives from the Peace Innovators and the Trench Town Community Development Committee (CDC) benefited from a capacity peace building programme organised by the VPA through the Community Advancement for Peace Project (CAPP).

Colleen Wint-Bond, Project Coordinator at the VPA said that the programme was developed by VPA member, Dr Kim Scott, Director of the Child Resiliency Programme and Dr Michelle Miller EdD., consultant.

“It is felt that this programme will be suitable for the CAPP capacity building with the community organisations. The programme is flexible, and Drs. Scott and Miller have already successfully implemented it with medical students, members of staff of a private sector financial

institution, case managers at the Ministry of National Security and lay pastors. The course has further been successfully completed for the Community Leaders Certificate course at the International University of the Caribbean (IUC) and to the Masters in Educational Administration and leadership program (MEd) at IUC,” she explained.

The programme includes 10 modules with 49 sessions and will cover interactive topics such as: peace building, resiliency and wellness; peace,



Colleen Wint-Bond, Project Coordinator, VPA

strategies for building peace resiliency and wellness; communication; handling conflict and trauma.

It also looks at self-improvement; family and community improvement; healthy relations that will lead to mutual respect; traits of a healthy family; how to use communication to build peace that lead to mutual respect; traits of a healthy family; how to use communication to build peace. The project focuses on equipping select local actors with the knowledge, skills and tools. Therefore restorative justice, reconciliation, forgiveness and freedom to choose are very important components for the participants who work directly with many high risk youth in their respective communities.

The participants focus on improving their environment to implement more effective secondary and tertiary youth crime prevention and to become more effective and sustainable actors. The VPA is interested in advancing collaborative, evidence-based youth crime and violence prevention strategies with key players in troubled communities. The course will continue after the Easter break and conclude with a short graduation.

## Photo Highlights of the Launch of ‘Creatives for Peace’

Creatives for Peace was launched on Thursday, February 24 at the Victoria Pier in Kingston. The initiative will facilitate a space where young talents can be showcased.



## Drum Therapy Project Receives Additional Support

The VPA is the recipient of drums and musical instruments that have been donated to its Drum Therapy Project, which it established in collaboration with the Child Protection and Family Services Agency (CPFSA).

The drums were donated by the American Friends of Jamaica (AFJ), some of which were presented to the West Haven Children’s Home in Hanover, and the Salvation Army - Windsor Lodge in Manchester where the project is being implemented.



Children at the West Haven Children’s Home

Jonelle Llewellyn, research associate at the VPA said that the donation has enabled the organisation to meet the project goals through allowing more wards of the state to be engaged.

“The donation is timely, and on behalf of the stakeholders of the project, we express our gratitude to the American Friends of Jamaica for their support. Having more instruments for the wards allows for

greater participation and skill building - all while having fun. We thank them for their continued efforts in enriching the lives of our nation’s children,” she said. The American Friends of Jamaica is a not-for-profit organisation dedicated to supporting Jamaican charitable organisations and social initiatives working to improve the lives of Jamaicans through systemic development in the areas of education, health care and economic development. The Drum Therapy Project is an initiative that arose out of the need to provide therapeutic outlets

for wards of the state who are not only impacted by the circumstances that have brought them to these homes, but also the psychological impacts of being confined during the COVID-19 pandemic. Select caregivers from the facilities have received drum training from Jesse Golding, trained drummer from the Edna Manley College of the Visual and Performing Arts. These trained caregivers have commenced sessions with the wards; each home has identified a schedule to reinforce lessons learnt from the initial training, and will be receiving intermittent follow up sessions with the trainer.

A GoFundMe account was established for the project as a crowd funding mechanism to support the outputs of the project. Persons can still donate to the project at the following link <https://www.gofundme.com/f/vpa-amp-cpfsa039s-drum-therapy-project-in-jamaica>.

## VPA Hands Over Tablet



Jonelle Llewellyn (second left) presents a tablet to Christopher Laraque, student of Old Harbour High School, who won first place in the six -12 year category Peace Day letter Competition that was held in 2021 in observation of International Peace Day.

Sharing in the moment are Anna-Kaye Coley-Dawkins (left) and Barbara Graham, teachers at the school.