



# The Governor-General's Youth Award Bahamas



## Celebrating 25yrs 1987-2012

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### How it began...

In June 1987, Commander David Newing, International Secretary from the Duke of Edinburgh's Award in London, met with officers from the Ministry of Labour, Youth, Sports and Community Affairs to discuss the re-establishment of the Bahamas Duke of Edinburgh's Award Programme in The Bahamas. After much deliberation with the Minister at the time, the late Hon. Peter Bethel, the programme was given the green light by government. Since 1987, the Award programme has strictly adhered to the principles and structure outlined by its governing body, the International Award Association.

To ensure the programme's success a workshop was conducted in August 1987, by Gillan Stevenson and Nick Gair from the International Secretariat. Membership opportunities were extended to many organizations including the Pathfinders, the Red Cross, Girl Guides, Boy Scouts, Boys Brigade, Junior Achievement and the Royal Bahamas Police Force Cadets.

Robert Nihon became the first chairman of the Bahamas Duke of Edinburgh's Award Committee. He remained in that position up to his death in 2007. Secretary for the committee was Rosamund Roberts, who still holds that post today.

Stephen Plakaris served as chairman of the National Council from 1987-1989. In 1988, Mrs. Roberts and Mr. Plakaris attended the International Forum meeting and the first, locally organized workshop for the Award programme was held, conducted by David Clarke.

In 1989 the Bahamas Duke of Edinburgh's Award staged its first fundraiser, a dinner and fashion show. The first Award ceremony followed a year later in 1990. Fourteen Bronze Awards and one Silver Award were presented to participants. Prince Edward was on hand for the event. The first National Executive Director was appointed in 1990 in the person of Ms. Janet Cartwright. Then in 1991, Denise Mortimer was appointed national executive director for the Award programme.

### To be continued...



#### Will Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme be reintroduced here?

The Ministry of Labour, Youth, Sports and Community Affairs is considering the possibility of reintroducing the Duke of Edinburgh Award Programme in the Bahamas. The programme was first introduced in 1987 but was discontinued in 1991. The award programme has been reintroduced in other Caribbean countries and is now being considered for the Bahamas. The award programme is a voluntary scheme which provides young people with a variety of challenges and opportunities to develop their skills and character. It is a well-known and respected award programme in many countries.



#### Duke of Edinburgh Award's dinner and fashion show Feb 24

The Bahamas Government has announced that it will be reintroducing the Duke of Edinburgh Award Programme in the Bahamas. The programme was first introduced in 1987 but was discontinued in 1991. The award programme is a voluntary scheme which provides young people with a variety of challenges and opportunities to develop their skills and character. It is a well-known and respected award programme in many countries.



#### Mortimer appointed executive director of Awards Programme

Denise Mortimer has been appointed as the National Executive Director of the Duke of Edinburgh Award Programme in the Bahamas. She will be responsible for the day-to-day operations of the programme and for ensuring that it continues to provide a high quality experience for young people. She has a wealth of experience in the field of youth development and is a dedicated and passionate leader.

## Cat Island signs on to GGYA Programme

**Cat Island, Bahamas** - After many failed attempts, two new units of the Governor General Youth Award have come on stream in Cat Island.

With new units up and running at the Arthur's Town and Old Bight High Schools, Cat Island joins the ranks of other islands such as New Providence, Grand Bahama, Long Island, Eleuthera, Exuma, Abaco and Andros where the 24-year-old programme has a presence.

"This is not the first time that the GGYA has been present in Cat Island, but it will be the first time that volunteers are in place and that will help make the units more successful," said GGYA's national director, Denise Mortimer. "The G.O.L.D. Initiative provided finances and sponsorships to the students of Cat Island. It was the only way it could happen."

Recognizing the value of the GGYA, in October 2010, the government entered into a three-year contract with the youth programme to provide funding, logistical and marketing support through the G.O.L.D. Initiative. G.O.L.D. is an acronym for Greatness, Opportunity, Leadership and Development.

The initiative's goal is to bring every school on every island of The Bahamas into the GGYA programme, opening it up to participants from age 14 to 25.

Unit Leader and religious studies teacher at Old Bight High School, Olga Wilson, sees the GGYA as an opportunity for Family Island students especially, to break from their monotonous, daily routine.

"Every day, all they do is go to school, then home and then to church," she explained. "Being a part of the GGYA will give the students positive exposure and alter their typical activities."

A total of 45 students from the two Cat Island schools have registered for the programme. All participants at the Cat Island schools are starting at the first level, the Bronze.

Fourteen year-old Anola King is excited about becoming a participant in the GGYA programme.

"It sounds exciting," said the tenth grade student at the Old Bight High School. "I want to discover new things and see around the Bahamas."



Old Bight High School



Arthur Town High School

## GGYA is good for Acklins

**Pompey Bay, Acklins** - With a population slightly over 400, there wasn't much for young persons to do on this rugged, sleepy little island until the Governor General's Youth Award came to town.

"Words cannot express how happy I am to see this programme in Acklins," said Acklins GGYA unit leader, Cora Ching-Hanna.

Students enrolled in this voluntary, non competitive programme of leisure activities have been given the opportunity to develop and sharpen important life skills, she added.

"They have also contributed valuable service to the community such as beautifying beaches, road clean ups, patching holes in the road and assisting with the project to restore Acklins after Hurricane Irene," Mrs Ching-Hanna said.

There are 35 participants in the Youth Award in Acklins. In November, 18 students marked a milestone by obtaining their first award, the Bronze. The higher the level, the longer the time it takes to achieve an award. The Bronze could be obtained in about six months.

The GGYA is a member of the International Award Association for Young People, headquartered in the United Kingdom. The Award Programme is based in over 130 countries world-wide.

Participants improve physical fitness, develop important skills, provide valuable community service and undertake an adventurous journey in order to achieve a Bronze, Silver, or Gold Award.

In fulfilling these requirements, the Acklins' students formed new basketball and volleyball teams. Some learnt to read music and play musical instruments which, in turn, lead to the re-formation of a school band at Acklins Central High School.

"This programme provides students with an overall learning experience. In Acklins there isn't much for these kids to do. This programme provides an outlet for kids to do something positive," said Acklins Central High principal, Ricardo Ferguson who attributes the programme's success locally to Ching-Hanna's dedication.

"I have observed students who have participated in this programme and one can see the leadership qualities in them. Overall, the students are excited about the programme and they always seem hyped up about it, despite the many miles they may have to hike."

Although the programme is open to persons age 14 to 25 years old, Mr. Ferguson has noticed increasing interest from persons as young as 12. Thus far, parents response to the GGYA has been overwhelming.

"I support the GGYA 100 percent. It's a programme that's geared to keeping our young people focused," said parent Diane Forbes. "When I saw my son's Bronze Award, I was so proud of his achievement." Another Acklins' parent, Marilyn Williams echoed similar sentiments. "I am thankful for this program. It's great for the kids," she said. "It keeps them out of trouble and it encourages them to make positive contributions to the community."

"I have had a great experience in the program. I have learnt so many things, in particular, how to survive and camp out in deserted areas," said Acklins

Bronze Award holder, Douglas Collie.

"Overall, this program has taught me a whole lot. I plan to continue with the program in order to achieve my Silver and Gold Award. Once I have completed the program I look forward to returning as a unit coordinator or volunteer."



## January

12<sup>th</sup> - Leaders Meeting  
15<sup>th</sup> - National Service Marathon Bahamas  
19<sup>th</sup> - Adventurous Journey Panel Meeting  
21<sup>st</sup> - 22<sup>nd</sup> - Bronze Q Adventurous Journey -  
North Eleuthera  
21<sup>st</sup> - 22<sup>nd</sup> - Bronze Q Adventurous Journey -  
Exuma participants  
27<sup>th</sup> - 29<sup>th</sup> - Grand Bahama Silver Q/Gold P

## February

11<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> - Bronze Q Adventurous Journey -  
North Eleuthera  
24<sup>th</sup> - 26<sup>th</sup> - Silver Qualifying/Gold Practice -  
Central Andros

## March

5<sup>th</sup> - Gold Award Presentation  
10<sup>th</sup> - 11<sup>th</sup> - Bronze Q Adventurous Journey -  
North Eleuthera  
16<sup>th</sup> - 18<sup>th</sup> - Leaders' Conference/Training  
17<sup>th</sup> - Annual General Meeting

## April

10<sup>th</sup> - 14<sup>th</sup> - BASE 2012  
22<sup>nd</sup> - Coastal Awareness Day

\*Dates are subjects to change\*

## GGYA partners with Millars Creek Preservation Group

On Saturday (Nov. 5), students of St Augustine's College Governor General Youth Award programme participated in a clean up campaign at Millars Creek.

The creek flows from Millars Sound in Coral Harbour through Bonefish Pond in Golden Isles and continues to South Beach.

Millars Creek and Bonefish Pond shelter many endangered and exotic fish.

The Millars Creek Preservation Group, headed by Emanuel McKenzie, is dedicated to preserving, protecting and increasing public awareness of Millars Creek and Bonefish Pond.

Pon their arrival participants were welcomed and briefed about the area. They were applauded for their decision to lend a hand and for the concern they displayed for the environment.

GGYA participants were put to work smoothing newly cleared roadway of rocks and wood.

Some moved garbage and other debris from the creek and the surrounding area, while others painted tables and benches.



## GGYA marches on

Participants in the Governor General's Youth Award turned out in full force for the annual Youth March held October 2nd.

Around 250 participants from 12 schools across New Providence took part in the event, according to Denise Mortimer, the GGYA's national director.

"This annual march is an important event for the GGYA. It shows young people the wide range of youth groups that are out there. They can very easily join any one of them, including the GGYA," she said. "This is just one of the positive events which the Youth Award participates in. Our participants - future leaders of The Bahamas - know that they possess the ability to not only raise awareness but also to inspire other young people to get active in the community."



## AIDS walk raise awareness

Notwithstanding the decline in new AIDS cases, a major reduction in mother-to-child transmission and decreasing mortality, the AIDS pandemic remains a leading cause of death among Bahamian men and women aged 25-44.

Bearing that sobering fact in mind, participants in the Governor General's Youth Award helped to raise AIDS awareness on November 26, 2011.

With the best hope for containment of HIV/AIDS being a reduction in the number of new infections, event organizer Anna Martin said youths must become more knowledgeable about the disease.

Approximately 120 youths walked from Arawak Cay to Montagu Beach tying red ribbons around trees and lamp poles along the route.

"For the past eight years we have had our participants take part in the annual walk to create AIDS awareness," said the GGYA's national executive director, Denise Mortimer. "It is important to promote an awareness of the disease especially amongst our young people."

For Bronze Award holder, Xavier Knowles the walk was a great experience.

"I saw it as a celebration for the advancement in AIDS studies and the lives of those living a healthy life with HIV," said the C.C. Sweeting Senior High School student. "I used the experience to also show remorse for those persons who unfortunately died from the disease. I know of persons who are living with the disease so I saw the event as a great opportunity to further create AIDS awareness."

AIDS kills, regardless of age, was the message that resonated with teenager Latitia Bethel.

"No matter how young you are, if you are sexually active you can catch the disease," said the Faith Temple Christian Academy student. "Therefore, I encourage all young people to practice abstinence until marriage."

This year the GGYA will hold a special balloon release to raise AIDS awareness.



## GGYA rocks Bay Street

Two hundred and five (205) GGYA participants had Bay Street rocking during the 2011 Junior Junkanoo Parade held on December 8. The occasion kicked off the beginning of the Governor General's Youth Award 25th anniversary celebrations.

The GGYA was the first youth organization to ever participate in Junior Junkanoo. However, its involvement in the 2011 junior parade marked only its third time rushing in the high profile event.

Music, dancing and colorful costumes filled the streets as GGYA participants performed during the joyous occasion. Yet, the GGYA was not in to win it. Rather the youth organization participated for the cultural experience.

Its participation in the event was made possible through the GGYA's Board of Trustees and the G.O.L.D. Initiative - a Ministry of Youth, Sports and Culture collaboration.

"I was really enthusiastic about performing with the GGYA," said C. V. Bethel High School student, 17-year-old Rashann Porter.



## 25th Proposed Anniversary

### Major Events

#### March

- Church Service
- Youth Rally
- Award Ceremonies (also in May, June and November)

#### July to August

- Hosting Caribbean Award Sub-Regional Council (CASC) July 27th - August 12th

#### October

- Hike to Sites
- Participants costume dance

### News Flash...

Ms. Mortts finisher at Marathon Bahamas 26.2 miles.  
Nurse Saunders (SAC unit leader) completes 1st half Marathon.

## Congratulations...

Well done to Ms. Montgomery on the birth of her son, Enrique Rio Donato Henry. Ms. Montgomery is a volunteer at St. Anne's High School.



A/B Javier Forbes on the birth of his son, Lil Jah. Javier is a member of the Adventurous Journey Panel and a Gold Award Holder.



Mr. & Mrs. Terez Rolle on the birth of their son, Terrell who was born on December 9th. Both are Gold Award Holders.



### Calling All Gold Participants

All Record Books & Service Diaries are due in the NAA office on or before January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2012

To qualify for the highest Award the following requirements for 12 months or longer after completing the Silver level must be completed:

- Performed a community service, keeping a diary/log book.
- Carried out an Adventurous Journey Expedition, Exploration or other Adventurous Activity for the duration of 4 days and 3 nights.
- Followed or studied a skill.
- Participated in a physical recreation.

**It's Time To Get Your Gold**