

REMARKS BY
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AT THE
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SAN FERNANDO CITY HALL AUDITORIUM
THURSDAY 14TH JULY 2016



GRADUATION TRAINING REPORT 2016

Period September 2015-July 2016

Salutations

I have the pleasure of sharing with you a brief report on the training activities for the period September 2015 to July 2016 culminating in the joyous occasion we are celebrating today.

One of America's great self- help authors Robert Collier once said "*Success is the sum of small efforts, repeated day in and day out*".

Our graduates before us here today provide solid empirical proof that this statement is true. The sum of their efforts during their tenure at NCPD has brought them to this point today. NCPD has been built on the premise that persons with disabilities should be recipients of equal opportunities, which are only available through accessible training, information, research and consultative services.

For those of you present today who may not be aware, NCPD's trainees possess a range of disabilities including Hearing and Speech Impairment, Muscular Dystrophy, Cerebral Palsy and other Physical Disabilities, Autism, Seizure Disorder, Down Syndrome, Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD), Speech & Vision Impaired and Developmentally delayed.

NCPD sees our young persons with disabilities as empowered citizens, finding employment, building careers and leading fully engaged and well rounded lives; benefiting from society while at the same time making a positive contribution towards our national community. Persons with disabilities deserve to be recipients of decent work, not by virtue of their disability, but rather, by virtue of being qualified in their chosen field.

NCPD's uniqueness is derived from the fact that we not only offer a range of vocational skills but we also offer certification in the varying skill areas. Our certification is accredited by the National Training Agency (NTA) and the National Examination Council (NEC). Both these bodies receive nationwide recognition by employers. In October 2015 we were granted centre approval through NTA to offer the Caribbean Vocational Qualification (CVQ). This represents the transition from the Trinidad and Tobago National Vocational Qualification (TTNVQ) to the CVQ which has the additional benefit of being a regionally recognized qualification.

The trainees who have successfully completed the NEC examination, and have attained proficiency in the craft level, have the opportunity to move onto the CVQ and attain a higher level of proficiency in their skill area.

As you are aware our training year covers the period September to July. The training year commencing September 2015 was marked by the admittance of fifty-one (51) new trainees, five (5) of which went into our Independent Living Skills Programme and forty-six (46) went into the Vocational Training Programme. As such, NCPD continued to operate at its maximum capacity of two hundred and fifty (250) persons. This is comprised of forty (40) persons in the Independent Living Skills and two hundred and ten (210) in Vocational Training. It should be noted however, that although NCPD admitted 51 trainees in 2015/2016 there continued to be fifty (50) persons on our waiting list.

In the Independent Living Skills Programme, trainees undertake life skills training to learn fundamental skills in order to be able to function independently. This training includes the development of social skills and community inclusion, alongside the development of everyday living skills. Trainees are also exposed to grocery and market shopping. Some trainees are eventually able to transition out to pursue a vocational skill.

The Vocational Training Programme provides certified skills training in the areas of agriculture, beauty culture, bookbinding, food preparation, garment construction, office administration, information technology, welding and woodworking. In an attempt to make trainees as marketable as possible, we have recently started offering soap making, and candle making classes, with the assistance of the Ministry of Community Development, Victoria District. These classes are not certified, but give the trainees additional income generating opportunities. Each semester, a new batch of trainees is selected to be exposed to these classes. NCPD has also recently started its paper recycling class, made possible with the support of the UNDP, as another way in which to expand trainees opportunities. Graduates from the bookbinding class are usually considered for this training due to the good fit between bookbinding and paper recycling.

In July 2016, thirty-two (32) trainees were presented for the National Examination Council's (NEC) Craft Certificate Level I in the areas of Woodwork, Beauty Culture, Welding, Agriculture, Bookbinding, Garment Construction and Food Preparation. In addition, six (6) trainees who graduated last year undertook the NEC Craft Certificate Level II in the area of

welding. The reports from the various examiners expounded upon the remarkable abilities of trainees that continues to impress them year after year.

In our presence today are thirty-two (32) young men and women who have acquired a level of competency and proficiency in their respective skill area that is comparable to any other graduating from a similar programme.

Sports

Over the past years NCPD has engaged in a number of sporting activities as part of our holistic development. Permit me to highlight just a few of our trainees' many accomplishments.

Three of our NCPD's trainees were recognized for their hard work, perseverance, dedication and commitment to their sporting disciplines at the 2015 First Citizens Youth Sports Awards. These trainees were Darrius Gokool for Floor Hockey, Brandon George for Football and T-Shian Gibson for Volleyball.

Other sporting events our trainees participated in were the Memisa Basketball Tournament, placing first (1st) winning \$1,000 and the challenge trophy; and the Digicel Kaleidodash 5K run winning \$15,000 for the team with the biggest contingent.

Every trainee has the privilege of participating at the annual PowerGen's Special Children Fun Day. NCPD's trainees basked in the spirit of sportsmanship and camaraderie, engaging in health competition and bringing home several medals and the 3rd place trophy for the best dressed team.

NCPD has become a force to be reckoned with at the Special Olympics National Games. In March of 2016 our trainees participated at the these Games in the sporting disciplines of Football, Track and Field, Volleyball, Bocce, Basketball and Swimming winning a combined total of fifty-seven (57) gold, twenty-nine (29) Silver and sixteen (16) Bronze medals and 23 ribbons.

At the 2015 Special Olympics Cricket National Games NCPD's trainees retained the prestigious title of Champions. However in the recently concluded 2016 competition our trainees placed second winning silver medals.

Once again in 2015 the Special Olympics World Games which was held in Los Angeles. At these games NCPD had a contingent of twenty (20) athletes in the sporting disciplines of volleyball, basketball, football and swimming as part of Trinidad and Tobago's National Team.

We also participated in the annual Special Olympics Floor Hockey National Games and won many gold, silver, bronze medals and ribbons. From these games, five (5) trainees and one (1) member of staff were selected to be part of the National Team at the International Floor Hockey Games which will be held in Graz, Austria in March, 2017.

All of these sporting successes could not be achieved without the dedication, commitment, teamwork and knowledge sharing from all members of staff, volunteers and most importantly all the trainees.

Music

In recent years a music programme, the objective of which was to assist us with helping trainees with severe behavioral issues to positively modify their behavior, was added to NCPD's curriculum. We wish to recognize United Way for providing us with the equipment to make this programme successful. This programme has indeed been truly successful, as we have seen a marked and demonstrated improvement in behavior of the targeted trainees.

2015 marked our first year participating in the T&T Music Festival South, Youth Festival, a competition open to all schools, of which NCPD was the only "Special School" participating. At this music festival NCPD had one entry in the age group 13-15 solo category with trainee T-Shian Gibson placing second (2nd) at this competitive forum. Through our music programme, we have also been able to establish a band, the '*NCPD Ensemble*'. The *Ensemble* has performed for many external and numerous in-house performances since its inception, showcasing the talent and abilities of our trainees.

Other Activates

We have also participated at the Very Special Arts (VSA) Drama festival in October, 2015 as well as the Consortium Of Disability Organizations' Music Festival in June 2016, along with many other fairs, expos and exhibits, all in an attempt to expose our young people to the arts, and culture, and the diverse and technologically dynamic world in which we live. We also see these events as part of our advocacy efforts - educating our communities about persons with disabilities.

Parent Support Group

A couple years ago, a passionate plea was made to parents to become more involved in the life of their young people. We asked parents/guardians to rally together to form a support group independent of the Centre. I am pleased to announce today that the support group, spearheaded by Ms. Patricia Griffith and other dedicated parents, has not only survived but grown from strength to strength. I would like to take this opportunity to encourage the parents/ guardians and family members present here today, to not only take an interest in your son/daughter's training but also join with the Parent Support Group.

Staff

NCPD continues to provide continuous professional development training to staff, such as sign language training and opportunities to attend training sessions, in order to equip staff to carry out their jobs more effectively.

Challenges Faced over 2015-2016

While I have spoken of many positives during the training period, I would like to take a few minutes to also identify some challenges that we faced and take this opportunity to implore all of you here today to assist us, in whatever capacity that you are attending today's graduation ceremony.

Every semester, NCPD holds a Parent meeting. While some of you here today have attended, many parents here today have not. I understand it may be a challenge to attend, but I really plead with you to understand the importance of working with us. If your child is continuing onto the CVQ, please attend these meetings.

NCPD continues to partner with the Ministry of Education and appreciates their support. However we have been seriously constrained financially with the late releases of funds by the Ministry. NCPD to date has not received funding for the period January –June 2016. In addition, due to the Ministry's requirement for a Psychoed evaluation, a number of trainees are not supported by the Ministry. In 2015 only 4 of the 51 trainees admitted were supported by the Ministry of Education.

Remarks to the Graduating Class of 2016

However, today we will not dwell on the negatives. Today we are celebrating!

Today we acknowledge the achievement and successes of the 2016 graduating class. We encourage you to remember “*your aspirations are your possibilities*”.

If you believe you can do it, you will do it!

If you believe you can achieve your dream, you will achieve your dream!

Graduates, you have only passed a milestone in the journey of your lives. This is not the end; in fact, it is the beginning, the beginning of your lives. Author Theodore T. Hunger once said “*keep steadily before you, the fact that all true success depends at last upon yourself*”. Remember this statement, embrace it and continue to strive for your place in this world.

Also remember as Joseph Addison said “*If you wish success in life, make perseverance your bosom friend, experience your wise counselor, caution your elder brother, and hope your guardian genius*”.

Congratulations to the graduating class of 2016.....we are all very proud of you!

Conclusion

As I close I want to express my thanks to the Board of Directors, our CEO Dr. Beverly Beckles and all members of staff for their continued dedication and hard work over the past year.

I would also like to extend gratitude to all the parents who have supported NCPD and, volunteers that have given their assistance over the last training year.

I say a very sincere thank you to all Corporate and Individual Sponsors who provided both cash and in-kind contributions to our Independent Living Skills and Vocational Rehabilitation Training Programmes.

In kind contributions such as the donation of the Aquaponics system by the Digicel Foundation allowed us to give trainees and apprentices’ hands on experience in this method of fish rearing and planting of short term crops.

Cash contributions allow us through the Bursary/Scholarship Programme to provide support to trainees who are in need of such.

Once again, Congratulations to the graduating class of 2016.....we are all very proud of you!

I thank you.