

NCPD Connection



March 2019 - Easter Volume

Message from the Chief Executive Officer



DOWN SYNDROME- Recognising the Ability

National Centre for Persons with Disabilities (NCPD) recognises the abilities of persons living with various disabilities and we continue to advocate for their rights, cater to their needs as well as, provide them with an opportunity to obtain skills training, rehabilitative services and employment. As we celebrate World Down Syndrome Day (WSDS) on March 21st, I have seen many of our trainees and apprentices with Down Syndrome (DS) strive for success, despite their challenges. It gives me a feeling of pride and

contentment since over the years we have taken these individuals under our wings and harnessed capable, well-rounded Citizens.

“Leave no one behind” is the theme for WSDS this year. Even though DS is the most commonly identifiable cause of intellectual disability, I stand firm in encouraging my NCPD family and others to look deep within and discover the abilities in persons living with special needs. Despite having a disability, their capabilities should never be underestimated as they may possess unique potential, skills and talents. Disability does not mean inability. There are many individuals with Down Syndrome who prosper in life and we ought to focus on the positives. Through empowerment, we can all encourage them to lead productive lives.

NCPD facilitates various training programmes which are designed to uncover the many hidden talents and abilities of such individuals. It is amazing to see their potential unfold as they

undergo training in their respective skill areas. Currently, there are eighteen trainees at NCPD with Down Syndrome. We have seen them progress and excel over the years as they continue to work towards achieving their goals.

As we celebrate the lives of all persons with Down Syndrome in Trinidad and Tobago and internationally, I take this opportunity to recognise and commend our very own trainees and apprentices at NCPD. As such, we remain committed to ensuring that they are given equal opportunities, fair and just treatment in society, thus allowing them to feel a sense of inclusion and empowerment, leaving no one behind.

Beverly Beckles, PhD
Chief Executive Officer

Editor's Note

Dear readers!

If you have stumbled upon this Newsletter, you're lucky buddy! You're just in time for a good read as we present to you our new fun-filled and exciting Easter Special Edition-Volume 11. Get ready for a joy-ride as we seek to firstly entice your mind with a fresh look at our featured article entitled "The Revelation".

Our focus for this Edition is Down Syndrome. World Down Syndrome Day is celebrated on March 21st, every year. The theme for World Down Syndrome Day this year is "Leave no one behind". In this Newsletter, we pay tribute to some of our trainees and apprentices with Down Syndrome. We acknowledge their efforts and extend best wishes to them as they pursue their training at NCPD. Additionally, we intend to take you on a colourful journey as we explore the #LotsofSocks Campaign. Every year for World Down Syndrome Day, people from around the globe display their mismatched socks to demonstrate acceptance for differences. Down Syndrome is also known as Trisomy 21.

As you continue to read through our pages, we take pride in providing you with details on NCPD's recent events and activities within the period, January-March 2019. In the mix, you will see special moments from this year's Carnival All-Inclusive Charity Fete as well as other exhilarating events. The Editor and team also extend best wishes to you for the Easter Season.



THE REVELATION

by
Verina Mayers

March 21st is World Down Syndrome Day. On this day, people with Down Syndrome and those who live and work with them throughout the world organise and participate in activities and events to raise public awareness and create a single global voice for advocating for the rights, inclusion and well being of people with Down syndrome.

For those of you who may not have known, Trisomy 21, commonly known as Down Syndrome is a genetic disorder caused by the presence of all or part of a third

copy of chromosome 21. It is typically associated with physical growth delays, mild to moderate intellectual disability, and characteristic facial features.

Let me share a line with you, "I believe our children are the future, teach them well and let them lead the way." Frequently I would sing this song (The Greatest love of All by Whitney Houston) to my five (5) year old daughter who was born with Trisomy 21. I take this opportunity to empower persons through our experience over the years thus far. Come travel with me as I take you through our journey from birth to present. I hope to leave a drastic impact, opening your eyes to the fact that, "Our children are the future, Believe in them and they will lead the way."

Admittedly, I was not always this optimistic. I recall the rush of emotions and anger that raced over me upon receiving the news about her diagnosis. There were times where confusing thoughts lingered longer in my mind as a mask of darkness in all the light. Many instances my thoughts led to crying eyes and significant feeling of hopelessness. Thankfully, I had many supportive persons in my life and this provided inspiration and positivity amidst the chaos. Oftentimes when sharing the story of my experience I would

be asked, "But how are you so happy?" and my response would always be "Does it make sense to be sad or angry even?" For me it's simple, dwelling on the negative causes us to be blind to all the surrounding positive light. It distracts us from the reality that something good can come from a negative situation once you direct your thoughts in a constructive way.

My daughter was born on June 5th 2013 at seven months two weeks and weighing 2.2 kgs. Shortly after her delivery she was rushed to the neonatal ward for immediate attention. Unaware of the circumstances surrounding what was taking place I lay on the hospital bed, full of worry. A million questions circled my head but I was reluctant to ask any for fear of bad news. Later that day, full of anxiety I took calculated steps toward the neonatal ward in pursuit of my baby girl. As I stepped into the room, I swiftly skimmed each cot in search of her blanket, upon finding her I let out a small breath of relief for faith had it that she was alive. I noticed that she was under oxygen, and then I was later informed that she could not breathe on her own. My eyes filled up as I could not imagine the difficulty which had faced her. About a week later I arrived at the ward continuing my daily visits but could not find

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her. Worry and fear filled me all at once. I then enquired and was informed that she was now in ICU (Intensive Care Unit). This was because she had abnormal heart beats and needed close attention and observation.

After doing an ECG we found that she had two holes in her heart, known as AVSD (Atrioventricular Septal Defect). This meant that open heart surgery was required to close up the hole. I was now overwhelmed with the fear of not knowing whether my child would survive to get the surgery or survive the surgery. What made it even more complicated was the fact that I could not go with her to do the surgery as I was deemed unfit to travel.

At this point it was confirmed that my child had Down syndrome. I felt restricted; everything I had planned would now be changed. Then my mind ran on society and how persons with disabilities such as Down Syndrome are accepted or rather not accepted. The social stigma of having a child with a disability also played a dreaded record in my mind. Slowly I changed my thought to disbelief, telling myself that she did not have Down syndrome, even though glaring signs of her diagnosis were there. At this point her father was also sharing the same belief I had. After the toss up in my mind I started to do research and realized that this does not have to be as bad as it seemed.

I found self advocates like, Frank Stephens, who shared his

own experience and articulated feelings and thoughts about living with Down Syndrome. This strengthened me and assisted in the realisation that my daughter, Jayrisse can achieve just like everyone else. "Your child is your investment," it would be a shame to waste good investment because of what others think. Each stage of her development we would read



the milestones and support her in achieving them.

From birth to five months I would repeatedly teach her how to say "da da" until successful. To strengthen her muscle tone, I massaged her limbs and joints. I would teach her to do baby exercises such as tummy time for strengthening of the neck (5 mins twice a day). I also used a crib mobile for her to reach out to objects. At 9 months, I would take her to the edge of the bed and teach her how to pull up to stand.

I used a lot of repetition to encourage/assist her learning. I also used YouTube videos,

hand - made charts, books and simply just singing with her any chance I got. At each stage of her development I would encourage age- appropriate behaviours such as basic manners, self-care, how to interact with others and how to respond to various situations. Most of all, I aim to teach her to be independent. Jayrisse can complete her homework on her own now. She even colours neatly. She can roll out a sada roti and make a warm cup of milk. All this didn't come as easy but with effort and determination success is a must.

We have taught her to love reading and writing as she continues to develop and strengthen her skills. She even attends pre-school and is involved in all class activities. Her teacher works together with me to obtain success. She loves dancing and gymnastics. She is kind, loving and willing to learn. Jayrisse will graduate from pre-school next year but this would not have been possible if we had not believed in her and most importantly, if I had not taught her to believe in herself.

Some words of advice to parents:

- Love your child
- Your child can achieve in more ways than you may think, so provide them with the opportunity to learn.
- The benefits of hard work are immense.
- Have patience. Take your time, don't rush your child.
- Show them all the beauty they possess inside.
- Never stop trying.

What is Down Syndrome?

Even though people with Down syndrome might act and look similar, each Down syndrome is a condition in which a person has an extra chromosome. Chromosomes are small “packages” of genes in the body. They determine how a baby’s body forms during pregnancy and how the baby’s body functions as it grows in the womb and after birth. Typically, a baby is born with 46 chromosomes. Babies with Down syndrome have an extra copy of one of these chromosomes, chromosome 21. A medical term for having an extra copy of a chromosome is ‘trisomy.’ Down syndrome is also referred to as Trisomy 21. This extra copy changes how the baby’s body and brain develop, which can cause both mental and physical challenges for the baby.

Some common physical features of Down syndrome include:

- A flattened face, especially the bridge of the nose
- Almond-shaped eyes that slant up
- A short neck
- Small ears
- A tongue that tends to stick out of the mouth
- Tiny white spots on the iris (colored part) of the eye
- Small hands and feet
- A single line across the palm of the hand (palmar crease)
- Small pinky fingers that sometimes curve toward the thumb
- Poor muscle tone or loose joints
- Shorter in height as children and adults



#LotsOfSocks Campaign

In order to promote World Down Syndrome Day, the #LotsOfSocks campaign was launched. People are encouraged to wear brightly coloured socks, long socks, printed socks, one sock... or even three socks for three chromosomes.

World Down Syndrome Day is celebrated on March 21 every year because the date, 3/21, speaks to the unique genetic combination that causes Down Syndrome. Trisomy 21, the technical term for Down Syndrome, occurs when three chromosomes, instead of two, are present in the 21st position in the genetic sequence. Down Syndrome International first celebrated those affected by Down Syndrome on this day in 2006, and it became an officially recognised international observance in 2011.

Different events and activities occur around the world on World Down Syndrome day to raise awareness about the disorder and to honour the amazing individuals who have Down Syndrome, but our favourite is #LotsOfSocks. The #LotsOfSocks movement started as a fun way to prompt a discussion about Down Syndrome and World Down Syndrome Day.



PAYING TRIBUTE TO SOME OF OUR TRAINEES AND APPRENTICES WITH DOWN SYNDROME



TAMEKA FLAVIN



LASSANNA WILSON



LEIGHAN HOWELL



CELINE RAMADHAR

New Faces at NCPD



Ms. Debbie Lumpress

NCPD is pleased to welcome Ms. Debbie Lumpress as she joined the Organisation on February 1st 2019. Ms. Lumpress attended the San Fernando Technical Institute. With servitude as part of her DNA, she began her career in Culinary Arts with Sally Ann Callendar, a well known caterer from Point Fortin.

That avenue propelled her to serve in a greater capacity, imparting into the minds of young people reminding them that serving in any capacity is one that must be done with dignity and honesty. This was at YTEPP where she served for twenty eight years. ‘When you serve people food one must create an awareness of nurturing a healthy lifestyle’. This is what she strongly believes.

The progression continued, she was then afforded the opportunity to serve as a CVQ Assessor and now, she humbly serves as a Culinary Arts Instructor at NCPD. Never shortsighted by the challenges of life, her vision is to have her very own cook book and health centered restaurant. She hopes with her many years of expertise she can add to the wealth of the organisation.



Ms. Kesha Mohammed

‘Life is such a delicate gift that is loaned to us for a short period of time, and I believe that it should be lived to its fullest doing deeds that are passionate to us.’ This is how Ms. Kesha Mohammed feels about her existence and she believes that God has blessed her with various virtues that can be beneficial to all. NCPD takes great pleasure in welcoming her to the Organisation.

Ms. Mohammed holds the position of a Vocational Counsellor at NCPD. She joined the NCPD family on January 14th 2019. Ms. Mohammed has highlighted that she possesses the patience, personality, love, kindness and humble attitude which are all key traits in helping someone, especially with disabilities.

She completed her Bsc. in Psychology with a Minor in Sociology. She also obtained certificates in Psychology as well as Guidance and Counselling from the University of the West Indies. She is also the holder of a Msc in Human Resource Management from the Arthur Lok Jack School of Business. It was during this Master’s practicum, that she together with a team designed the Health and Safety plan for the Autistic Society of Trinidad and Tobago. During this project she discovered her passion for

helping persons. Thus, after completion of this programme she began yet another Masters in Occupational Therapy at the University of the Southern Caribbean, the only school in the Caribbean that offers this programme. She is now in her first year.

Ms. Mohammed enjoys outdoor activities especially sports, dancing, hiking, swimming. She also has a passion for photography, videography and cooking. She enjoys almost anything and is very open to trying new things. Her hope one day is to go into practice as an Occupational Therapist. Working at National Centre for Persons with Disabilities, she believes that she has a step in the right direction toward achieving her goals and also gaining exposure and experience in a field that she is truly passionate about.

She enjoys reading suspense, thrillers and horror novels. Her favourite author is Stephen King. She also enjoys the lively outdoors; hiking, photography and assisting others to develop their strengths. Her biggest interest is to travel to various countries, to experience the various cultures and explore their natural habitat.



Ms. Joy Edwards

NCPD extends a warm welcome to Ms. Joy Edwards who joined the Organisation on January 2nd. She is a year three student pursuing her Bsc. in Education in the area of Special Needs. Also, she is the mother of four who loves kids and is very loving, persistent, friendly, proactive. She is presently the Remedial Instructor at NCPD. She teaches Maths, Social Studies, Science and Language Arts to the trainees. Miss Joy finds great joy in tutoring the trainees to reach their fullest potential, motivating them to aim for the sky. Her hobbies are reading, watching movies and meeting people.

Her favourite quotes in life are;

~You're not defined by your past, you're prepared by it. You're stronger, more experienced and have greater confidence.

~Sometimes you face difficulties not because you're doing something wrong but because you're doing something right.



Ms. Karen Joachim

NCPD warmly welcomes Ms. Karen Joachim who recently joined the Organisation. Ms. Joachim is an On the Job Trainee at NCPD. She holds the position as an "IT Assistant". She has completed her Bsc. Degree in Computer Science. One of her goals is to become involved in the networking field. Currently, Ms Joachim assists in the IT Unit, lending support to the maintenance and updating of computer systems. She hopes to use her skills and qualification in the IT field to further enhance and upkeep the efficiency of NCPD computer systems.

NCPD's Activities January - March 2019

West Coast Reach! Concert

National Centre for persons with Disabilities (NCPD) takes this time to recognise one of its staff members and Remedial Instructor, Ms. Rhonda Lewis who attended and performed at the West Coast Reach! Benefit Concert. This event was held at Victoria BC, Canada. As someone who is very passionate about the Performing Arts, Ms. Lewis has shared her remarkable and exhilarating experience with her NCPD family upon her return. She excitingly expressed that there were many entertaining acts performed at the concert, ranging from persons with various types of disabilities. Sky Mundell, a Jazz pianist who possessed both hearing and visual impairments stunned the crowd with his performance. She also praised a Comedian with autism, Curran Dobbs who played his guitar and captivated the audience. Indeed, this was a very proud and profound moment described by Ms. Lewis and NCPD commends her for her participation in such an esteemed event.

Ms. Lewis has been an original REACH member in Tobago and also a Board member of Arts Alive when she lived in Tobago. Her performance of her original pieces was outstanding at this special event. In addition to being a featured solo performer, she also joined the REACH Performing Co. on group numbers. This was a tremendous and great opportunity to share the cultures, to teach, inspire and celebrate diversity and inclusion of persons with disabilities. NCPD is proud to learn of such a unique and inspiring platform and we are thankful to Ms. Lewis for sharing her remarkable experience with us, which she has also suggested that even NCPD can incorporate Performing Arts at the Centre for future initiatives.



Patron's Visit

On January 31st 2019, former President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, Justice Anthony Thomas Aquinas Carmona, ORTT, SC visited National Centre for Persons with Disabilities in his capacity of Patron of the Organisation. During his time as President of the country, Justice Anthony Thomas Aquinas Carmona, ORTT, SC served as Patron to NCPD and has once again accepted the opportunity to do so.

Justice Carmona was warmly welcomed by Members of the Board, Chief Executive Officer, Dr. Beckles and this was followed by a detailed tour of the facilities where he got an opportunity to interact further with staff, trainees/apprentices. He also got a tour of the training spaces and the social enterprise of the Organisation.

Justice Carmona took the opportunity to encourage trainees/apprentices to be creative and inventors of technologies. After the tour, there was a closed door meeting with Members of the Board and CEO about the Organisation and moving it forward.



A 'Fete' to Remember

On February 17th 2019, NCPD held its annual All-Inclusive Charity Fete on the NCPD compound. This year marked the 19th year of the event. Patrons were entertained by DJ Alpha B and DJ Black Gold, the band The Flick, the BIG band U-PHORIA, Dil- E- Nadan and Nadia Batson. Patrons were treated to a wide variety of food and desserts along with a well stocked bar and friendly service.

The event which is one of a kind is held annually to raise much needed funds that goes towards the work of the Organisation. The Board Members, CEO and Staff extends a heartfelt THANKS to all who supported this fundraising venture and we look forward to your continued support.



DIGICEL Foundation Carnival Kiddie Pump

DIGICEL Foundation hosted its annual Carnival Kiddie Pump on February 25th 2019 at the Police Barracks, St. James. Twenty-Six trainees/apprentices accompanied by training staff attended this fun event.

The afternoon was filled with live entertainment from local Soca artistes such as Preedy and Nailah Blackman. There were fun games, face painting, magic show and lots of food and drinks.

At the event, jubilation and enthusiasm filled the atmosphere when NCPD won the Flag Competition and was awarded free internet for one year. This was indeed a very proud and exciting moment. The trainees/apprentices enjoyed themselves tremendously and look forward to next year's event.



POWERGEN Fun Day

POWERGEN held its annual Fun day on March 20th 2019 at the POWERGEN Grounds in Penal. NCPD had a contingent of over a 100 trainees/apprentices who were accompanied by instructors. NCPD took part in the March Pass and captured the 4th place in Best Banner.

Trainees/Apprentices also took part in the fun games such as Chariot, Fill the Bucket, Sack race and many others.

They were entertained by local Soca sensation, Ola who recently was a contestant on the X Factor. The event was a success and the trainees/apprentices enjoyed it thoroughly.



Special Olympics International 2019 World Summer Games

The Special Olympics Trinidad and Tobago Delegation of Thirty-One (31) Athletes, Eleven (11) Coaches and Two (2) Officials journeyed to the Special Olympics International 2019 World Summer Games in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates (UAE) from March 8th to March 20th. The Team took part in Bocce, Equestrian, Track and Field and Swimming. Team Trinidad and Tobago ended the event with 57 medals.

NCPD Athletes who competed in the Special Olympics this year included; Stefan Singh, Shanice Baptiste, Alicia Khan, Jaleel Pierre and Donald Doyle. Stefan Singh and Jaleel Pierre participated in the Swimming competition. Stefan won 2 silver medals and 1 (6th place) ribbon. Jaleel won 2 gold medals and 1 silver medal. Alicia Khan won 3 silver medals in Bocce. Donald Doyle competed in Track and Field. He won 2 bronze medals and 1 (6th place) ribbon.

We at National Centre for Persons with Disabilities salute and congratulate the team on a job well done. We are swollen with immense pride over this remarkable victory. We extend best wishes to the team as they continue to excel in all their endeavours.



NCPD's Upcoming Activities

Date

4th June 2019
27th June 2019

Activities

NCPD Outing to La Vega
Annual General Meeting

Wellness Tip

Get up and drink a bottle of water

In Japan, people drink two glasses of water as the first thing in the morning. Interestingly, it has the greatest overall longevity being the only country with over 50,000 centenarians. Whether it's in the water practice or something else, we can learn a few tricks from Japanese to improve our health.

Benefits of drinking water in the morning:

- Rehydrates your body
- Flushes out toxins
- Improves metabolism
- Increases brain power
- Boosts the immune system



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Our Vision

To be a World Class Social Enterprise promoting social inclusion for persons with disabilities.

Our Mission

To enhance the quality of life of persons with disabilities, towards achieving an inclusive society.