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A Rousing Christmas Get-Together At CURET

By Carol Johnson

CURET's students, teachers, staff, volunteers, friends and families took the time off from their studies and joined as one family in celebrating the joy and peace of the Christmas season. Everyone shared a delicious meal in relaxation with music, sharing pleasant moments together.

The general consensus among attendees was the fact that the occasion was so relaxing, so full filling and inspiring.

In the world of adult learners when life and the situations of students may change every moment, Louis Ruddock encouraged students

to focus on the reality of pursuing an education when they have a family that depends on them. It's not easy but it can be done. As a student, it depends on putting in time and sacrifice; in the end it's worth it," he said.

It was heartening to see the level of determination and tenacity exercised by the students. The event was an evening of empowerment. Education was the focus and the need to be a finisher was critical.

Dr. Henry Haye, captivated the gathering with some touching remarks. He talked about the discipline it requires in pursuing an edu

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A section of the gathering at CURET's Christmas and year-end get-together

Some Thoughts On The November 8, 2016 Election

Concerning North Hartford: First, I would like to thank the residents of North Hartford for their overwhelming support.

I always tell people I am a product of my environment. To the elders who guided, encouraged, prayed and supported me from the first time I won, Thank you! I will always seek your advice.

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Rep. Doug McCrory

To the people my age, who grew up with me in the neighborhoods, thank you for your continued support and help. I would also like to thank all of my students, especially the Weaver crew, who registered to vote 12 years ago when I served as assistant principal. Please know I will always be thankful for your support.

I recall the first time I ran for office you all came out and supported me 100%. I was full of emotion when you rode bicycles to the polls and said, "I came to vote for my principal!"

During this election cycle, I saw many of them still coming back to the polls years later, staying involved in the political process. The results of the recent election were a mandate for me to return to work and continue to speak up and out for our community! I will definitely be that voice. Knowing you all have my back, you will hear my

voice much louder!

With Reference to the National Election: I hope people don't take this the wrong way. In my view, the Democratic Party has to take a long look in the mirror. It's evident that we can no longer take communities, like the one I represent, for granted anymore.

A prime example is this, I did not see any advertising dollars spent in our community or in any of our media outlets during the entire political cycle from any of the presidential and congressional candidates asking for our support or encouraging our participation. That was totally unacceptable.

The Democrats received over 95% of the votes from our community and did not spend one penny with our local/community newspapers, radio, or television out

lets. We deserve and should demand recognition of the fact that our vote counts and our concerns matter.

Finally, Donald Trump's victory should be a wakeup call for all of us. It reminds me of the Reconstruction Era, particularly the election of 1876 and the great compromise of 1877, in addition to the Southern Strategy from 1963-1972.

If you are not familiar with these times in American history, do a Google search on the information! Our communities were at a crossroads.

In short, it's time to use those Kwanzaa principals that we learned to work together, invest in each other, and build our neighborhoods street by street!

Don't Look for Others to Come Save Us! Solutions must

begin and come from within our communities first. I do believe there is a role for government but we have always found a way to prevail throughout history, together.

That's why learning our history and teaching others are so important! Be inspired by the history of UNIA and Marcus Garvey's Black Star Line, Black Wall Street, The Chicago Defender, the Negro League, among many others.

And by all means, do not blame yourselves for the outcome of the Presidential Election. We survived hundreds of years of slavery and Jim Crow, we can surely survive our current socioeconomic climate.

(Douglas McCrory is a State Representative for Hartford and a Vice Principal at CREC Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts.).

Gwen Ifill, A Life Well Lived

She was Barbadian to the core, as was my grandfather. Disciplined, authoritative, a no nonsense streak, and an insistence on eminently high quality work these qualities were instilled in her as a child by her grandmother and her parents. This earned her respect and admiration in her chosen career as a world class journalist, humanitarian and a committed Christian.



Jim Daniels

The Ifill's history is attached to the West Indian migration patterns that evolved because of the construction at the turn of the 20th Century of the American financed Panama Canal. Gwen's father, Oliver Urcille Ifill Sr., born to Barbadian parents, Gerald and Matilda Ifill, saw the opportunity to improve his life and migrated to Panama to become part of the enormous throng of West Indian laborers who arrived to participate in the construction of the canal. Oliver, who became a member of the African Methodist Episcopal Church and subsequently a pastor, met and married his wife Eleanor who was also born in Barbados. Later, the church sent him to Barbados as a missionary to serve the church's congregation on the island.

Three children were born to the couple in Panama and three after the couple's arrival in the US. Gerald died as a relatively young man but the children born in Panama, who according to Rev Earl Ifill, Presiding Elder of the AME Church Atlanta District, "(we) had instilled into us by our grandmother an insistence for high achievement and the value of a good education if we were ever to improve our lives.

It was simply the way we were all raised." Oliver Ifill, the patri

arch, died in 1991 having risen to General Secretary of the AME Church in the United States.

Gwen, whose full name was Gwendolyn L. Ifill, passed away on November 14, 2016. She had been diagnosed with breast and endometrial cancer. She was 61.

Mixed among the sincere and passionate expressions of condolences are reminiscences that paint an astonishing picture of a woman who would be described as having a "keep moving forward" obsession.

There was nothing about her public persona, in an age of insinuations by some that they must be noticed; must continuously receive adulation, which would lead the most dedicated viewer of her television on camera appearances, that she had struck a path that led her to the dizzying heights of her profession.

At one of his new conferences before he flew off to Greece, Germany, and Peru, President Obama said of her, "Gwen was an extraordinary journalist. She always kept faith with the fundamental responsibilities of her profession asking tough questions, holding people in power accountable, and defending a strong and free press that makes our democracy work.

I always appreciated Gwen's reporting, even when I was at the receiving end of one of her tough and thorough interviews.

She was an especially powerful role model for young women and girls who admired her integrity, her tenacity, and her intellect and for whom she blazed a trail as one half of the first all female anchor team on network news."

Gwen Ifill served as moderator and managing editor of *Washington Week* and co anchor and managing editor of PBS NewsHour with Judy Woodruff. Before coming to PBS in 1999,

Gwen was chief congressional and political correspondent for NBC News, White House correspondent for *The New York Times*, and a local and national political reporter for *The Washington Post*. She also reported for the *Baltimore Evening Sun* and the *Boston Herald*

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A Christmas Message

Retelling The Christmas Story

By Edgar Johnson

Once again, we are in the Christmas seasons. All around us are clear signs that tell us, “it is that season of the year again. The blooming of the poinsettia plants in all their lush colors, some peach, green, white and sparkled, and the traditional red that dominates over other color choices. And with the coming of the seasons, there are the unstoppable. “It is Christmas time.” The focus is on the big holiday and the ultimate spectacular Christmas holiday.

And of course, in the United States, the touchstones that set the beginning of the holiday seasons are what may be said to be: Black Friday and Cyber Monday. It is no wonder the 2016 shoppers topped the list among holiday shoppers; consumers spending over \$6,730 billion, purchasing their traditional holiday gifts.

As a season of giving and sharing, people are celebrating the season, recognizing and accepting the multicultural Christmas festivities in appreciation of the many cultures and languages represented.

Yes, for many the preparation for the Christmas holidays demands lots of planning beyond shopping and gifts giving. It involves fun, planning your gifts, Christmas cards, preparation of the grand meal, cooking, eating and entertaining families, friends and much more.

Those who are part of the Judeo Christian faith, add a biblical dimension to their celebration and festivities. They look beyond the overwhelming commercial emphasis, secular customs, and even sheer paganism attached to Christmas and continues to embrace the hope, joy, and peace that the Christmas season brings a fresh to their heart.

So many attend Houses of Worship during the Christmas season, to hear the retelling of the Christmas story. Jesus’ birth is transformational. He is the Emmanuel, “the Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace, and the True “Heavenly Gift.”

“Then the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which will be to all people. For there

is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:10-11). Herein lies the truth of the Christmas story God’s gift to humanity becoming flesh and dwelling with us, the great deliverer came to save, to give life to and save the world.

According to Luke’s account, the shepherds living in the fields were stunned upon hearing the good news of the angel, announcing Jesus’ birth: “And there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and

saying:

“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men” (Luke 2: 13-14). The

angel’s announcement of good news accompanied with praise and adoration was not fake news that gave false

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By Stan Walker

Christmas, the annual festival commemorating the birth of Jesus Christ, is a religious and cultural celebration worldwide. But according to some people, over the years it has evolved from its true meaning, with many of its traditions continuously changing.

Modern Christmas has nothing to do with its true meaning. The celebration has become so materialized that enticed by snazzy advertisements in the newspapers, television, and the radio, people go on spending binges, buying up all kinds of merchandise and commodities whether they need them or not.

Despite the commercialization of Christmas over the years, there are some Christmas traditions that have survived the test of time. For people on the religious side, the true spirit of Christmas is still there, but if you are not a Christian person, it is all about Santa Claus, dressing up and especially nowadays, parties.

However, while growing up, have you ever wondered how such symbols such as the Christmas tree and the ornamental wreath came about? Since the light decorations on the houses are springing up, it has lifted up my spirits for the holidays, and I have found myself reading some stories on how many people spend their time celebrating the occasion, and I came across a book, which gave me the answer to the above question.

Based on what I read in the book, the following are information on some of the most popular symbols of Christmas:

The Christmas Tree:



As an evergreen, the Christmas

tree is one of the few trees that does not die (lose its leaves) in the winter. It is a symbol of life.

The Christmas Candle:



The candle symbolizes Jesus as a Light in the darkness.

The Star:



The star is one of the most popular symbols. It was the star, which led the shepherds to the humble cradle of the newborn King.

Christmas Bells:



The bells say to us, “Listen, take note!” the Bells of Christmas have a special meaning for they sing out the joyous message of that first Christmas morn.

Santa Claus:



Santa Claus is really Saint Nicholas, who was generous to the poor and always gave gifts secretly, we are

told. He reflected God’s gift of grace to all.

The Wreath:



In ancient times, heroes were rewarded with wreaths as trophies. A wreath also symbolizes Jesus’ victory over trials and tribulations.

The Candy Cane:



On the night Jesus was born, shepherds were invited by the angel to go see the newborn King. The Candy Cane symbolizes the shepherd’s staff.

Ornaments:



Ornaments are used to be made of bread and cookies and hung on the Christmas tree, symbolizing “our daily bread.” The tradition of edible decoration is still carried on when we give and share special Christmas breads and food with friends and relatives.

Christmas Colors Red and Green: Red symbolizes the bright happiness of Christmas.

Green is the color of hope, life, and growth.

Christmas:

The article in the book I read ended the list of symbols with the word “Christmas” itself. It is a combination of the Latin words Christus and Missus meaning, “Christ is sent,” it said. May you have a blessed and thankful Christmas!



Christmas Celebration Losing Its True Meaning

By Stan Walker

What do you think of when you hear of Christmas? Is it the many gifts you hope to receive or the delicious family dinner that you use to so eagerly dream of?

According to a few people from the Caribbean with whom I spoke, Christmas, the annual festival commemorating the birth of our savior Jesus Christ a religious and cultural celebration held worldwide, over the years, has evolved from its true meaning, with its traditions constantly changing.

For some people on the religious side, the true spirit of Christmas is still there, but if you are not a Christian person, nowadays it’s all about Santa Claus, dressing up, parties and the entrapments, one of them said. “It has lost its religious meaning and instead, has become less about Christ.”

A Caribbean flavored Christmas highlights the religious significance of the Christian festival while emphasizing togetherness of the family unit. People from the Caribbean are inclined to celebrate the holiday in the same way as they used to do at home wherever they are.

To most people from the Caribbean, Christmas is a time of joy, merry making, giving and celebrating with friends. Today, however, especially if you live in the US, for many much of the celebration has nothing to do with the birth of Christ.

“Nowadays, there are a lot of shopping, buying expensive gifts, a lot of electronics for kids tablets, cell phones, laptops, games. We never had a lot of electronics in my days. It was more like toy cars for

the boys and dolls for the girls. But we had fun fixing up the house we used to paint, and decorate the place nicely,” one individual said.

“While growing up as a youth in the island, I could not wait for Christmas day for the gifts and Christmas meal, but reflecting on the adoption of the American custom of going out of our way to engage in the lavish spending and buying during the season, today after the celebrations are over, we find ourselves with a mountain of bills,” she added.

“Actually, Christmas celebration in the island was more ‘churchy.’ We used to go to pageants and Christmas plays, and to different churches that would put on the Nativity scene. In those days, it was more on the religious side because it was Christ’s birthday, but these days, it’s more commercialized,” she said.

Another individual chimed in that in her earlier years, she viewed Christmas as a celebration of Christ. “Some people used to love making eggnog, and on Christmas Day, we had a big Christmas dinner, at family get togethers. We would have the rum cake and different types of meat. We would have dinner, then relax and talk. It used to be fun. We usually have prayers, but now it’s only just party, party, party,” she stated.

Christmas to me is just the same, another individual said, because I still stick to the traditions putting pepper lights on the house, decorating the Christmas tree with my kids, preparing the special dishes the special sorrel drink.


“Many of my friends have changed. They can’t be bothered to do the traditional anymore, but I guess because of my kids, Christmas is still the same at my house. Back in the days,

Christmas was in the air so much that you could actually feel it you would hear the songs, everywhere would be lit up and decorated but now it’s somewhat different.

“In the past, Christmas used to be firmly rooted in spirituality. It was a time when we spread good cheer to our fellow men. The reason for the celebration is related to faith or belief in God, whether we were Christians or non Christians,” she stated.

“Many people consciously or subconsciously don’t believe in God anymore,” she said, “hence the loss of appetite for a season that celebrates a notion that is almost extinct.

Until we re establish our connection to spirituality, it will keep getting worst.”



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Christmas At CURET

Continued from Page 1

cation. He acknowledged the families in attendance and noted their commitment and devotion to education.

What made his talk so dramatic was when he shared the experience (with permission) of one of his students who was in attendance at the celebration. Her joining the CURET family is an awesome testament of the determination of this student was her educational goal and her goal for her developing family.

According to Haye, this student amazed him and inspired him to keep on teaching, motivating his students.

This particular student seldom missed a class, hardly anything stopped her from attending classes: Consider this: She attended class on a recent Monday evening and on that same Monday went home when class ended and gave birth to her daughter that night. Timing was everything in this case of Dr. Haye and his true to life student. That was astounding.

Upon hearing and seeing the student 'in the flesh,' at the gathering

at the celebration was awestruck and applauded the student.

Barbara Ewing, teacher, in her pep talk encouraged the students and their families in attendance on the importance of goal setting and paying attention to the goal daily. That's one way for goals to become realities. She said that challenges will arise that's just a given but "don't let challenges hold you back, you are a member of the CURET Family," she said.

Teacher Anthony Sasser spoke from his own life experiences working full time and studying full time, at the same time.

Toiling hours on homework and other required assignments mean that, "at times your sleep time is truncated. But hang there. It will not last forever. When you acquire your education, no one can take that away from you. So don't get wearing in doing well," he said.

Students were given updates on several upcoming services that will be offered by CURET. CURET's partnership with Capital Community College opens

up several opportunities for students to receive training, even certificates that will help them to land a job. Personal Financial Workshops will continue next semester; free Citizenship Classes will be convened.

Teacher Judith Forrest talked about upcoming Women

Empowering for groups of women. "Many women are the breadwinners for their families; they are the nurturers; they are both mothers and fathers.

So they wear many hats and at times it's too much and throws them off balance, leaving

them lopsided," Forrester said. What an opportunity for students!

To learn more about CURET's services or to volunteer and make a difference, "giving something back," please call (860 247 0123 or Email: info@curetinc.org.



Judy Forrester, CURET Teacher, makes her way through the gathering, ensuring that everyone is served.



Family-get-together time at CURET, celebrating the down-time, relaxing and taking it all in at the celebration--the holidays are finally here.



CURET Teachers Louis Ruddock (left) and Anthony Sasser with students Gwendolyn Gordon, Nadine Lyons, and Claudette Johnson-Watson sharing the festive occasion, and thinking that they will revisit the books and tests after the holidays, but for now it's fun time.

Retelling The Christmas Story

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information causing great deal of confusion about the basic facts of the event. Like Mary (Luke 1:30) the shepherds went in haste to Bethlehem and found Mary and Joseph and the Babe living in manger (Luke 2:16).

And according to Matthew (2:1 2) as astrologers, wise men followed the star from the East until it stopped over where the young child was. They "rejoiced exceedingly with great joy (2:10), paying homage to him and presenting gifts to the Babe.

What a picture the gospel writers present in announcing the birth of the Messiah God's gift to humanity. They affirm Jesus the Savior of the world.

He is the answer to the cries of the human heart. He is the way, the truth and the life. In the midst of a chaotic world, a world in disarray, hate and disharmony, he bridges the chasms.

He uplifts the human dignity of all people and announces good news of joy concerning the man for all nations and the ages. "Was that a mighty day when Jesus Christ was born?" Angels came from heaven, when

Jesus was born, giving glory to the king.

In Luke's view, God's glory is revealed in the coming of His Son who brings a new situation of peace between God and humanity in which His blessings can be communicated to them.

Furthermore, we have noticed that for Luke, the birth of Jesus touches all people the economically and socially deprived, the broken hearted, the captives, the oppressed and the lowly the blind see and the lame walk, lepers are cleaned and deaf hear, the dead are raised and the Gospel preached to the poor.

Evidently, the birth of Jesus brings a new situation of peace between God and humanity in which His blessings can be communicated.

So, as you wait in expectancy for the ultimate spectacular Christmas Day, may the joy of Christmas be yours as you celebrate the true spirit of Christmas, rooted in the Christian faith of peace, love, hope and joy in this world and the better world to come everlasting life. Merry Christmas and a most prosperous and Happy New Year.

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As I See It: Jamaica Calls You Home



Christopher A. Service Sr.

During the late 1950s into the 1960s many West Indian nation als migrated to England and the United States in search of a 'better life.' Among those people was Jamaican ex policeman and poet, Claude McKay. One of McKay's poems, *The Lament of the Banana Man*, ended with the lines "... I can't go back to Jamaica now, but I want to die there anyhow."

As I see it, those lines reflected a desire on the part of the poet to go back 'home.' Home was the place where he played with boys and girls of his age and did the things that children do. As an adult, it meant the place where he would share pleasantries with friends and family. It was the place where per haps the cool sea breezes would refresh and comfort him on a day that there was too much heat to han dle. It was home.

Economic reality obvious ly settled in and, like so many oth ers, he headed for 'greener pastures.' I place a pun upon 'greener' because some folks equate 'green' with money. Leaving the shores of Jamaica for many meant an end to all money problems and a better life overall. The reality is that many have been disillusioned and disap pointed.

As I see it, when the aforementioned folks left the shores of Jamaica, it was very possible that

they left with the intention of acquir ing some money and returning to the island. There were a few who sold most, if not all, they had to migrate to an unknown environment. The latter group was invariably not well read and with no marketable skills. That group became frustrated as a result of not being able to handle life in a developed country. That group became overwhelmed by the reality that they had nothing to go back to in Jamaica. Unfortunately, many became mentally ill as a result.

For many others who migrated to England, Canada, and United States the hope was or still is the same. They want to get enough money to be able to go back 'home' and live happily ever after. The ques tion is, how much money is enough. As I see it, enough is a relative term; it is a different thing to different people.

Many put off going back to Jamaica for decades still waiting to acquire enough money to go back home. The reality is that many go back there to be buried.

The development that is tak ing place in Jamaica on a daily, monthly, and yearly basis has kept pace, to a certain extent, with other parts of the world. Those that stay away for years are not a part of the development, and upon their return to the 'land of their birth,' the place they call 'yarrrd,' they are called 'farina.'

Ironically, there is a Jamaican singer who composed a song entitled, 'No Weh No Betta Dan Yarrd.' He migrated to Canada. As I see it, there are many who are in love with the idea of going back to the Jamaica that used to be. Those that think the Jamaica that they left still exists need to 'wake up.'

A visit to the 'land of wood and water' would be fitting, especially at this time of the year. Go back to where you used to 'mingle with the good people.' You just might meet some of them along the way. That is as I see it.

Ifill

Continued from Page 2

American. Gwen was also the best selling author of *The Breakthrough: Politics and Race in the Age of Obama*.

Gwen received more than 20 honorary doctorates and served on the boards of the News Literacy Project, the Committee to Protect Journalists, and she was a fellow with the American Academy of Sciences. In 2015 she was awarded with the National Press Club's high est honor, the Fourth Estate Award.

But it did not start out that way. The obstacles she overcame as a black woman in the news business also marked Ifill's acclaimed career.

As a Simmons College intern at the Boston Herald American, a staffer left a note that included telling her, "Nigger go home." Ifill would go on to be the only black moderator and the only woman moderating the 2004 vice presidential debate between Dick Cheney and John Edwards, and then the 2008 vice presidential debate between Joe Biden and Sarah Palin.

She also moderated a pri mary debate between Sen. Bernie Sanders and Hillary Clinton last year.

"When I was a little girl watching programs like this because that's the kind of nerdy fam ily we were I would look up and not see anyone who looked like me in any way. No women. No people of color," said Ifill in 2013 after being appointed as co host of PBS NewsHour.

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Caribbean Tidbits

Jamaican scientist among 100 Leading Global Thinkers

Scientist Dr Gavin Jones created his tory recently when he became the first Jamaican named among Foreign Policy magazine’s 100 Leading Global Thinkers. Jones shared the award with his IBM research colleague Jeannette Garcia for developing a process to chemically recycle plastics while preventing BPA (bisphenol A) a chemical that is added to many commercial products, including food containers and hygiene products from leaching. * * *

Bahamas Gov’t denies offering rewards for illegal immigrants

The Bahamas Government has dismissed reports that it is offering rewards for information leading to the arrest of illegal immigrants in the country.

In a brief statement, the Department of Immigration said that a recent statement being circulated on social media and reported by at least one local media house “about the offer of rewards by the department for information leading to the arrest of illegal migrants is patently false.” “It is not an announcement from the Department of Immigration or any government agency and should be ignored and not circulated.” * * *

No fake rice so far in Jamaica, says Samuda

Fears that there could be a shortage of rice in Jamaica were quelled by Minister of Industry and Commerce Kar Samuda, who on Tuesday, December 13, announced that imports from Guyana and Suriname would be allowed into the market.

The Jamaica Customs Agency (JCA) on Monday, December 12, temporarily ceased the clearance of rice at all ports of entry, pending test results after a news report suggested that plastic rice was being sold for consumption in the country.

Samuda told journalists at a press conference at his New Kingston office that the Bureau of Standards Jamaica (BSJ) was provided with samples taken from across the island, including Manchester where the threat originated, and that so far, he can assure consumers that there is no evidence of any contamination of plastic within the samples tested. * * *

T&T’s oldest woman likes her scotch

Trinidad and Tobago’s oldest woman, Vivian Reese turned 110 years old Thursday, December 8 and celebrated the day with family. Reese lives in the family’s home at Tabaquite Main Road in Rio Claro. She now passes the time sitting in her favorite rocking chair, said Reese’s great grandson Kochise Raphael. He said she is a pillar in the family and the community. Reese, who suffers no ailments, celebrated her birthday with family and close friends. Raphael said Vivian came from a family of cocoa farmers and attributes her longevity to her religious nature and eating healthy. * * *

Man jailed for ganja trafficking collapses

On Tuesday, December 13, a man collapsed at the Christianburg Magistrate’s Court in Linden, Guyana after he, along with his friends, were each jailed for three years and fined \$4M for cultivating marijuana. Conrad Hackette, 50, of 360 Toucan Drive, South Ruimveldt, Georgetown; Paul Coleman, 49, of ‘E’ Field, Sophia and Dexter DaSilva were jointly on trial for cultivation and traf-

ficking of marijuana. The charge read that, on September 19, 2015, they were cultivating 53 of the prohibited plants at Yaruni, Demerara River, and also had eight grams of the same substance in their possession for the purpose of trafficking. * * *

Joy as toddler hears for the first time

A Barbadian mother and father’s dream of hearing their child speak became a reality over the past seven months. In May, three year old Jdae Prescott made headlines when she had a cochlear implant (CI) affixed to her inner ear, during a surgical procedure, the first of its kind in the Caribbean.

The surgery, at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital (QEH), made it possible for the toddler to hear for the first time. Her parents, Janelle Prescott and Damian Griffith, were delighted about their daughter being a part of history because it meant that she was finally hearing their voices.

Give Love For The Holiday Season



Thomas Aldridge, Ph.D

As the Christmas Holiday season approaches, many people are running around frantically trying to find gifts for friends and loved ones. While this is a humane and noble gesture, some people still fret and wonder if the persons will like the gift, if they are spending enough, and questioning whether or not they can afford the kind of gifts others are expecting.

However, many of us forget that giving should be from care for someone else; it should be given in the spirit of love.

When you give gifts, it should come from the heart. It should not be about what someone

else expects, or what you will get in return. When you give someone a gift, especially at Christmas, you are saying to that person, “I am doing this because of how I feel about you, and I want you to feel loved during this festive season.” This action epitomizes showing and giving love.

Remember, true giving comes from the same place inside of you, where dwells your deepest happiness. When you give a gift it is enjoyed twice, first by you the giver, and then by the person who receives it. So it should not matter if the person you reach out to never offers you a gift in return. This should not be an exchange, but a gift, an act of love.

A gift does not have to be wrapped or tied with a ribbon. It can be found in a different form like small personal acts of kindness. It could be a smile, a word of advice, a word of reassurance, a compliment, some appreciation or a shoulder to lean on. All this spells “love”; the kind of love that Bob Marley called “One Love.” If you treat everyone

you meet humanely, then you are sending love. This love weighs much more than gold.

From an early age I learned from my parents, that generosity and kindness are not limited to material possessions, but rather by the purpose of the heart. Although we did not have much financially, and Christmas toys had to be recycled, we children were very happy with what we had most of our family and a whole lot of love.

My parents believed that every single act of love and kindness would multiply and come back many times over, and that the more you give, the better you would feel. We were also taught that if we give without any expectation of getting something back, the returns would be limitless.

The act of giving is often simpler than you might think. It is true that if you want to experience joy, you should give joy to others, if you want to feel loved, you have to give love, and if you want to feel wanted and appreciated, then you must learn to show these virtues to others.



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December 2016 First Aid Meet

CURET Troop 1443
First Eagle Scouts

CURET Troop 1443 at 2016 Klondike Winter Survival Challenge

CURET Scouting Highlights: The 2016 Year In Review

By Jerry Hancock

Scouting is a journey! What better way to get a feel for this, than to look back and reflect on the journey through 2016. Revisiting some of the highlights for CURET Troop 1443 Boy Scouts during the past year will give us a perspective on the benefits of participating in Scouting.

Rather than compiling a list in chronological order, let's begin with mentioning some of the milestones that the scouts reached this past year.

Some of the troop's activities were monumental undertakings and others were more typical of what the troop pursues in any given year. However, the impact in the lives of each scout is unsurpassed by the feeling of accomplishment each scout receives as he partakes on his personal trail as a scout.

The year 2016 saw the second EAGLE Scout entering the ranks of CURET Troop 1443. Khalil Hamilton joined his brother Kiymani Hamilton in achieving scouting's highest honor.

There is a lot to say about achieving this rank. Foremost is, a scout earns the honor through demonstrating leadership and service to others. Khalil chose a conservation project to 'Save the Turtles' and the year before Kiymani built two picnic tables and installed an announcement board at CURET.

Both projects were a benefit for their respective causes, and in like fashion both EAGLE Scouts gained valuable life experience that will serve them well into adulthood.

Another first for the scouts was a trip to the Summit Bechtel Reserve High Adventure Camp in West Virginia. Through a generous grant Troop 1443 scouts along with other Mark Twain District scouts were provided the opportunity to spend a week in the Boy Scouts of America's premier camping venue.

After a 14 hour bus ride, the scouts settled in and began a weeklong exposure to new opportunities like mountain biking and zip lining. Though the camp was challenging physically, this was outweighed by the friendships and bonds made between their fellow scouts.

These two extraordinary experiences are representative of the scouting program. While you may partake in an activity as a group, it is often the personal experience that you gain from the most. Here are some highlights depicting this sentiment.

February is Scout Sunday month. The scouts adhered to their scout oath when they say they have a 'Duty to God' by worshipping together at St. Monica's Church in Hartford. At the same time, they completed some service

hours by donating to the church's food pantry.

Later in the year, the scouts took part in a 'Clean up' day on the grounds of CURET at 1443 Albany Avenue in preparation for CURET's 25th Anniversary celebration and to say thanks to CURET for being the Troop's Chartering Agency.

The aim of scouting is to develop character, citizenship, and physical fitness in a scout. It takes character to strive to become an Eagle Scout and you need to be physically fit to spend a week at camp in the mountains of West Virginia.

As for Citizenship, the CURET Troop 1443 scouts got a chance to see it occur right before their very own eyes, by participating as flag bearers in the Citizenship Day Ceremonies for newly recognized Citizens of the United States of America at the Hartford Public Library.

A scout comes away from witnessing this auspicious ceremony with a renewed respect for what our country stands for. The pride in every new citizen's declaration of becoming an American citizen gives all of us a pause to renew our devotion to the values that we sometimes take for granted.

Scouts live by the Scout Oath & Scout Law in their daily lives. The best way to practice their slogan 'Do a good turn daily' is by community service to others. The best way to practice the scout motto to 'Be Prepared' is to learn and train. Troop 1443 Scouts did exactly that this past year.

For the second year in a row the Wolf and Royals Patrols garnered the Capital City Division's First Place ribbon in the annual CT Rivers Council First Aid Meet. On top of that, these same patrols trained and competed in the Winter Klondike this past February. The Klondike is a test of a scout's knowledge of winter survival skills in the outdoors, held in the backcountry of one of the Council's scout reservations.

These highlights of the 2016 scouting year in review are only a few of the many troop and individual activities that scouts in CURET Troop 1443 can seek out. Opportunities abound and to see these scouts in action will leave you awestruck!

Why not look further into the opportunities scouting can offer a boy in your family? CURET Troop 1443 meets most Saturdays from 3:5 pm at the Main Hartford Public Library and most Tuesdays from 6:00 7:45 pm at CURET 1443 Albany Avenue, Hartford. Call Scoutmaster Dean Rhoden 860 462 5656 for more information on how you can join, support or contribute financially to your local Hartford scout troop. (Make checks payable to Troop 1443 and mail to: Troop 1443, c/o CURET, 1443 Albany Avenue, Hartford, CT 06112. Jerry Hancock is an assistant Scoutmaster in CURET Troop 1443.

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