



Mayor John Tory visits Tropicana's Employment Program

- Youth Job Connection

This unique opportunity offered youth the ability to speak directly with the Mayor about their concerns for their future. The group had a candid discussion with the Mayor about youth employment, gun control and crime issues in Toronto. Participants also inquired about the expansion and accessibility of youth employment programs, such as the Youth Job Connection program which teaches about jobs, helps participants gain work experience and leads to long-term employment and meaningful careers. The class also engaged the Mayor by discussing about job security for youth, employment expectations while on the job, budgeting, and volunteering as a way of getting into the desired career path.

The participants were very confident and comfortable in asking questions to the Mayor and expressed how they felt about the processes of youth programs by the Government and gave recommendations on how these programs should be located across the City of Toronto for easier access by youth.

The Mayor was happily surprised by the confidence level, knowledge and enthusiasm of the group. He encouraged them to stay focused and continue to advocate for themselves and other youth in the City. The Mayor commended and thanked staff for their hard work in working with the youth and mentioned that he would continue to find ways to support youth employment programs as these were truly impactful.



TROPICANA'S NEW PRESIDENT -CAROL COMISSIONG

Carol Comissiong has a vision for Tropicana. She would like Tropicana to be a flagship for our community. Ms. Comissiong believes that Tropicana has the potential to be a leader in the services that we provide. It will require commitment and hard work to get there, but Ms.

innovative ways to connect with new supporters and to show them that Tropicana has a meaningful impact on our community. For Tropicana to be sustainable, it is also essential that we minimize inefficiencies. "We need to look at how we are spending every dollar. There is nothing that I hate more than waste."

When considering the services that Tropicana provides, Ms. Comissiong is focused on improving the lives of the people in our community in many different ways. Specifically she mentions the programs that support women who are experiencing domestic abuse and youth who are considering their options for their education. "I am interested in growth of the mind, body, and soul."

As the new president of Tropicana, growth will also be Ms. Comissiong's focus. "Tropicana has been a pillar in the Black and Caribbean community for many years. It needs to have programs that are sustainable and the organization needs to be financially viable." Charles Darwin said that "It is not the strongest or the most intelligent who will survive but those who can best manage change." Organizational change is difficult and often unsuccessful. However, Tropicana is lucky to have a president who has led changes of a similar scope in the corporate sector and who is deeply committed to the organization's success.

Comissiong's professional experience combined with her tenacity make her well suited to lead Tropicana through this transition.

Ms. Comissiong served in financial leadership roles at IBM Canada for twenty years, including a position as Chief Financial Officer of the Caribbean division. Coming from this background, Ms. Comissiong firmly believes that non-profit organizations need to think like a business. "If we are going to be sustainable, we can't just keep doing what we've done before. We need to always be asking how we can do better."

Since governments are under pressure to reduce funding and there are many different organizations competing for donor dollars, Tropicana needs to find

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT JOSEPH ROUSE



Joseph Rouse, retired TDSB High school teacher and dedicated Volunteer Tutor at Tropicana Community Services, started his love of learning and teaching in Trinidad. Joseph was the first of eight children and his parents taught them the importance of "getting a good education". They provided the tools,

support and encouragement for their children to achieve that goal. Joseph, as the first-born, heeded his parents' advice, as evident in his varied list of accomplishments, both at home in Trinidad and internationally. It should be noted that his siblings followed in his footsteps, all being well-educated and accomplished in their various fields of study.

Joseph's accomplishments read like a 'never-ending' certificate (1959 - 2006)

- Apprentice lithographer at the Ministry of Agriculture, Trinidad
- Attended the London College of Printing to study Photo-lithography and Printing management

- Migrated to Canada and worked for 5 years in the print industry. Also enrolled as a part-time student at Atkinson College, York University. Graduated with a BA in Political Science and Physical Education
- Completed a Bachelor of Education at the University of Toronto and worked with the Cities of York, Toronto and North York Boards from 1984 to 2006
- Taught Mathematics, Accounting, Geography, Special Education at Downsview Secondary and Sir Sandford Fleming Secondary School/Academy. Joseph organized the intramural soccer tournaments, coached the boys' soccer team and was part of the Guidance Counselling Department.
- From 1990 to present, he volunteered with African Heritage Educators' Network- Project 90 and started tutoring at Tropicana in 2011.

Thanks to Selwyn Rouse, long-standing Tropicana tutor, for inviting his brother Joseph to join the amazing tutors at Tropicana Community Services.

Joseph, you have brought a wealth of knowledge and experience to our Tutoring program. What an accomplishment for a life well-lived. Your parents set the standard for their children and you all excelled. **Congratulations!!!**



JENNY GUMBS REFLECTS ON HER TERM AS TROPICANA'S PRESIDENT

Although she didn't know it at the time, the way that Jenny Gumbs was introduced to Tropicana would set the tone for how she would lead the organization as president more than ten years later. As the Consul General of Grenada in Toronto, Ms. Gumbs noted that whenever there was a crisis, such as the 2004 hurricane in Grenada, Tropicana was always reaching out to help. Fast forward to today and Ms. Gumbs continues to be inspired by the way that Tropicana is able to impact lives with every service that we provide.

While Ms. Gumbs remains keenly focused on making a difference in our community by providing people with opportunities, as president she invested a lot of time into administrative details such as developing and reviewing the board and management relationship, the reinstatement of contracts at the management level, and the review of contracts for staff. "It's tedious admin stuff, but if we don't address these details, they could undermine the

effectiveness of the organization." Ms. Gumbs' approach to leadership is collaborative. "I have enjoyed working with the diverse personalities and skills at Tropicana. I value everyone's input. It is important that the board comes together as one unit and that we are cohesive and respectful."

As Consul General, Ms. Gumbs has a vast network that she used to raise awareness of the services that Tropicana provides to the community, "I was amazed that a lot of corporations didn't know about Tropicana. We need to find a way to better connect with people and corporations who have resources."

When considering the future of Tropicana, Ms. Gumbs is focused on delivering services representative of the mission and strategic initiatives of the organization, "We have already conducted audits in some areas and activities including, HR, IT and Finance. We introduced various policies and performance indicators to better assist us in assessing what we were doing well and identify areas where we need improvement. We will continue to evaluate programs and work as a team on capacity building to ensure the sustainability of the organization."

While Ms. Gumbs acknowledges that every organization encounters challenges, she knows that the team at Tropicana has the strength and dedication to face anything that comes. "Tropicana has a remarkable impact and is valued by its stakeholders." As it did when Grenada was hit by a hurricane in 2004, Tropicana will continue to identify and serve the needs of the people in the community - helping in whatever way we can.

2018 SCHOLARSHIP FUND RECIPIENTS



This year's recipient of the **Robert K. Brown Scholarship**, **Jaleel Alfred**, is enrolled in the Child and Youth Care program at Centennial College. Since attending Centennial College, he has demonstrated a keen interest in delivering social services to communities outside of his own and was selected to attend a trip to Costa Rica as part of the Global Citizenship and Equity Learning Experience. Jaleel is also passionate about the arts, particularly music, and has used this passion to create an in-home music studio where he engineers music and uses the art to give back to Black youth.

Deandra Christopher has been awarded the **Dr. Gervan Fearon Scholarship**. As a clinician and educator, she has worked in Scarborough for the last six years, providing therapy, workshops and training, and service coordination to families who have children with Autism Spectrum Disorder. She is currently completing a graduate diploma in Education and Digital Technologies at University of Ontario Institute of Technology and is hoping to transition her completed courses to the Masters of Education and Technology this September. Completing this Masters program will provide her with the knowledge and skills to improve engagement and learning opportunities for families accessing the Toronto Autism Services in the Scarborough region.



Tropicana opened its doors for their annual signature fundraising event, Uplifting Spirits which raised over \$44,000 in support of its programming. Celebrating 4 years as Toronto's premier Caribbean food and drink event, the hallways of Tropicana were filled with sights, sounds and smells of the Caribbean. Guests were welcomed with a tropical drink, the sweet sounds of steelpan and masqueraders who mingled among the crowd. On-air personality, Kerry Lee Crawford from G98.7fm's Steps after Dark and the G-Drive radio shows played host for a second year. Also, back for an encore performance was the Lester McLean band who kept attendees toe tapping to original and cover songs.

The featured food hosts did not disappoint with their creative Caribbean inspired tastings which included, ackee bites, BBQ jerk jackfruit spring rolls, and spicy pumpkin soup to name a few.

This year's VIP suite was sponsored by Appleton Estate Rum who offered up Appleton Rare (12 years old) and Appleton Estate Reserve Blend (6 years old).

The evening was made possible by Presenting Sponsor TD Bank, Silver Sponsors Freedom Mobile, Jamaica Tourist Board and DASD and Bronze Sponsors Lyon & Butler and The Co-operators. Thank you to the volunteers for making the evening even more special.

GIVE A MONTHLY GIFT TO

Your monthly donation will make a difference in the lives of youth, newcomers, people of Black and Caribbean heritage and others in need.

You can donate monthly through pre-authorized gifts by credit card (Visa, MasterCard and Amex) or by submitting a void cheque for pre-authorized payments through your bank account.

Simply let us know the amount that you would like to

give, and where you would like to designate your gift. Information about your monthly donation can be provided to us by fax, mail, phone, or online through canadahelps.org.

Be sure to include your name, address and telephone number so that we may properly acknowledge your gift and provide you with a charitable tax receipt.