



have been able to integrate into the normal school system. Mrs. Ionie Chatoor who is one of the Regional Co-ordinators of the Guyana Community Based Rehabilitation Programme was instrumental in facilitating the integration

TOTAL INTEGRATION

The children are Farouk Mohamed, Shameer Mohamed, Robeltro Dindiyal and Bibi Halima Hamid, all of whom are four years old.

Mrs. Chatoor, a Head teacher, discovered the youngsters during the National Census exercise. Mrs. Chatoor explained that the children were being kept at home because their parents were afraid that they would be mocked and rejected.

One suffers from Down's syndrome and two have physical disabilities. Mrs. Chatoor was able to persuade the parents to get the children registered at the Blossom Scheme



Nursery School. The children had to be taught how to socialise with their peers.

A classroom at the Blossom Scheme Nursery School where four children with disabilities have been integrated in the normal school system. Can you identify the different children?

Although the integration process began a few months ago, much progress has been made and the children have been accepted by their peers.

Blossom Scheme Nursery School at Enmore on the East Coast of Demerara has recently been one of the educational institutions where children with disabilities

People with disabilities face barriers in the most basic areas of life: employment, education, recreation, health care, and personal relationships. Unsure of where to turn for help and suspicious about medications, parents may be reluctant to admit that their children are not behaving as other children.

After realization has set in and the denial phase is over, relatives and friends of the disabled person still seek help because life has to go on. In the meantime, their children may literally be tearing apart their household, creating problems among their siblings, and increasing the isolation and despair of the whole family. Therefore, offering support at the right time can ensure the survival of a family.

As persons with disabilities, we cannot afford to be silent and withdrawn. We have to come forward and let the world know about us. Only then will we be respected.

I feel that there should be a lot more lobbying for rights. People with disabilities need much more focused and concentrated strategies for empowerment. Over the years, due to the effort of the Guyana Community Based Rehabilitation Programme and other organisations, we have made several important advancements, but we must not rest on our laurels. We cannot take refuge in that which we have achieved; so long as we need the disability legislation that has been taking such a long time to be implemented.

Society's accumulated myths and fears about disability and disease are as handicapping as are the physical limitations that result from actual impairment. Perhaps the most significant barriers faced by persons with disabilities relate to the attitudes, predispositions, and behaviours of non-disabled persons. Such attitudes range from negative views of disability to discomfort in associating with people who experience some form of disability.

One common tendency is that non-disabled people tend to be preoccupied with disabling conditions and often are incapable of seeing beyond these conditions to the whole person. Such predispositions lead non-disabled persons to overlook and ignore the full range of talents and abilities of persons with disabilities.

The politicians do not see themselves getting many votes from people with disabilities, so they largely ignore us. And there is no consideration, whatsoever, for the needs of people with disabilities, unless certain people can get up and lobby for more rights for them.

One of the most basic issues in the field of disabilities is widespread public misunderstanding. Lack of accurate information about mental disorders among parents, paediatricians, immigrant groups, the elderly, and those who serve them, reduces the possibility of timely detection and effective treatment

On a positive note, there are several public and private sector organisations that have in their employ, persons with disabilities. I am not sure if the employment was the result of some form of affirmative action or whether the persons with disabilities won from open selection processes.

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February Fantasy II

February Fantasy II, held on Friday February 28, 2002 was a huge success. This event is becoming a signature activity for the

Guyana Community Based Rehabilitation Programme as it showcases the talents of persons with disabilities together with friends.

For the second successive year, the event was held at the Ocean View Convention Centre at Liliendaal, Greater Georgetown, this time, under the patronage of His Excellency, Mr. Serge Marcoux, High Commissioner of Canada to Guyana. Last year's patron was His Excellency, Mr. Edward Glover, the High Commissioner of the United Kingdom to Guyana.

Described as an Enchanted Evening of Dinner and Entertainment, the event included a guest appearance by Miss Guyana (World), Odessa Phillips and several dance sequences by the National Dance Company. In addition, several persons with disabilities displayed their talents. Well-known radio broadcaster, Russell Lancaster hosted the programme.



Canadian High Commissioner to Guyana, His Excellency, Mr. Serge Marcoux, delivering the feature address at February Fantasy II.

From the desk of the National Advisor

- Mrs. Geraldine Maison Halls

Four fundamental philosophical tenets guide the work of the Guyana Community Based Rehabilitation Programme, namely,

- recognition of persons with disabilities as citizens
- equalisation of opportunities for development
- equal access to resources and support
- creation of a society that values all persons

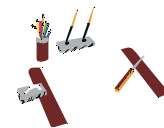
As a consequence, the CBR Programme envisions a society in which persons with disabilities are recognized and respected as valuable citizens, integrated into the social life of the country and contributing their talents and skills.

However, this vision appears far from being a reality, as persons with disabilities continue to face many challenges on a daily basis. Among some of those challenges experienced by persons with disabilities are the lack of national policies and legislation to support many of the initiatives that

w Mrs. Geraldine Maison Halls, GBR National Advisor (left) and Miss Guyana World 2002, Odessa Philips in conversation with Mr. Serge Marcoux, High Commissioner of Canada to Guyana.

the limited interest about disability issues by the media.

It is imperative, therefore, that all persons with disabilities are exposed to citizenship education, so that they can better advocate for their rights. Citizenship education may be defined as a strategy that facilitates the development of



individuals to be responsible and participating members of the society. The educational process is concerned with removing all barriers to development and promoting the participation of all individuals vulnerable to exclusion or marginalisation as a result of disabling conditions.

The CBR programme sees itself as having a critical role in promoting citizenship education. Persons with disabilities and their families are the primary targets of the education process in an effort to increase their understanding of their rights and responsibilities. However, equally important is the need to target community groups, such as children, teachers, health professionals, community leaders and workers and public sector administrators, so that they would be responsive to the call for the creation of a supportive environment for persons with disabilities.

The GCBR Programme recognises that disability is a societal responsibility, as it has implications for all sectors of the society. It is essential that commonly held prejudices towards persons with disabilities be addressed and eliminated, if real progress is to be made in the area of national development. No society can move forward without the inclusion of this large and largely untapped pool of human resources.

Nigel's is First

Nigel's Supermarket has become the first Supermarket in Guyana to be designated a

Disabled-Friendly Business by the National Commission on Disability (NCD) which began a campaign to place signs at firms which are considered friendly to persons with physical disabilities.

This campaign was launched in April 2003 at Nigel's Supermarket at Robb Street and has several other businesses and institutions, including Jag's Sales, Silvie's General Store, the Bank of Nova Scotia, the National Bank of Industry and Commerce Limited on New Market Street and Royal Castle have received the designation. The aisles and shelves at Nigel's Supermarket have been arranged in such a manner that a person in a wheel chair or using a crutch can do their shopping with a minimum of assistance.

The NCD has, over the years, encouraged organisations to make their premises accessible to persons with physical disabilities and this could later be extended to visually and aurally impaired persons.

NCD Commissioner Hillary Christopher, explained that for businesses to be considered 'friendly', a person with a physical disability should be able to get into the building with minimum fatigue using ramps. The passageways in the building and the toilets should be so equipped so that persons can use them with the least amount of discomfort. The toilets should also be able to accommodate a person in a wheelchair.

Obituary

Roland Spencer

The Guyana Community Based Rehabilitation Programme (GCBR) has noted with deep sorrow, the passing of Mr. Roland Spencer of the West Coast Berbice Community Based Rehabilitation Group. Mr. Spencer has had an outstanding career in the Public Service, culminating with his appointment as Internal Auditor at the Office of the President. We extend our sincerest condolences to his relatives and friends. We will miss him and all the important

contributions he has made in the effort to make life better for persons with disabilities.

Aubrey Thomas

Aubrey Thomas of 39 Covent Garden, East Bank Demerara died on March 15, 2003. He was the son of Anette Sataya one of the CBR Regional Co-ordinators. Annette expresses her sincerest thanks and deepest appreciation to all those who assisted and sympathised with her in her time of grief. They include friends, neighbours, relatives and members of the Guyana Community Based Rehabilitation Programme.

From the desk of the
Chairman
Mr. Gregory Glasgow

We need to give more support

On the 28th May 2003, I was walking down Carmichael Street, Georgetown when, in the vicinity of the Ptolemy Reid Rehabilitation Centre, I saw a friend. As I approached him, the thing that struck me was that a child was leading him.

As I got closer to him, I stopped and greeted him. He was surprised to have come into contact with me and explained that he was trying to “see” me to discuss his predicament.

He went on to explain that one night in July 2002, while he was having a leisure walk, two bandits attacked him, severely damaged both eyes and left him blind. He said since that time his world has become a dark one, he was accustomed to seeing and doing things for himself.

I told him that I empathised with him, as I could understand what this situation had done to him. I assured him that even in the light of the challenges with which he is faced, it was not the end of the world, as he would need to make adjustments to cope with the situation. I explained to him what were some of the steps he could take to get on top of these challenges and to get on with his life.

We arranged to meet some other time so that I can work with him in helping to make the necessary adjustments.

As we parted and I continued on my business, the thought came to me forcibly that there are many persons who are going about their normal businesses, unaware of disability. It is only when they or someone connected to them are confronted with a situation similar to that of my friend that they become concerned about disability issues.

Research has shown that more persons with disabilities acquire their disabilities after birth and less have congenital disabilities (born with the disability). Some of the contributing factors are diabetes, strokes, and accidents, among others. This means that we have to be ever conscious of the fact, that during our lifetime, there is always the possibility that we could acquire a disability.

There is a crying need, therefore, for us to change our attitudes and behaviour towards persons with disabilities and give them the support necessary to live a normal life and realise their full potential. Since it may happen that one day we may be in a similar situation and will need such support.

Stop Child Abuse - Save Our Children

Odessa Phillips Joins US

Miss Guyana-World, Odessa Phillips has indicated a keen interest in being an active participant in activities organised by the Guyana Community Based rehabilitation Programme (GCBR).

Miss Phillips who hails from Vergenoegen, East Bank Essequibo communicated this interest to CBR Co-ordinator, Mrs. Gwendoline Glasgow, who was instrumental in getting her to volunteer her services, and also to the Editor of *Hopeful Steps*, Mr. Leon Walcott.

Miss Phillips explained that, "since I was a little girl, I have always dreamt of being so wealthy that I can have my own charitable organisation. My heart has always gone out to the disabled, the poor and the sick." This statement was not surprising, because when she was asked to be a part of *February Fantasy II*, one of GCBR's fund-raising activities, Miss Phillips accepted without hesitation.

She said, "It would be a joy for me to assist persons with disabilities. My family has always been kind to those who are less fortunate, so it would not be a strange experience for me."

Odessa will be rendering her services to the West Demerara CBR unit. Her presence will be a source of inspiration to many persons with disabilities. She wants to be involved in activities that would result in direct benefits to persons with disabilities.

Names and addresses of C.B.R R.P Regional

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Mrs Grace Barry - Region # 4

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Resources Unit: Grove Public Road E.B.D.

Mrs. Pollette Dainty - Region # 2

Queenstown Public Road, Essequibo Coast
c/o Audrey Seymour Tel: 771-4081

Mrs. Gwendoline Glasgow - Region # 4

2 W 1\2 Cove and John. E.C.D. Tel: 229-2685
Buxton Health Centre.

Mrs. Nathalie Millington- Ramoutar - Region # 6

10 Vryheid New Amsterdam, Berbice Tel: 333-3373

Mrs. Deslyn Fraser - Region # 5

Lovely Lass Village, West Coast Berbice..

Ms Ionie Chatoor - Region # 4

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Tips and Advice for Persons With Disabilities

This month, we will be publishing some tips and advice for assisting persons who have relatives or friends with disabilities. The tips are extracted from *Life After Injury*, a manual written by Liz Hobbs, Susan McDonough and Ann O'Callaghan, who are Australian physio and occupational therapists, and published by Third World Network of Malaysia.

The authors say, and we are sure that you will agree, "with early rehabilitation, a good life is possible, but without early rehabilitation, a good life is difficult."

They recommend that when a person is injured or acquires a disability, the family should stay closer and the person should learn to move and do things again. Research and observation have shown that a person who is

lonely and frightened is likely to develop more problems. Exercise and learning new skills must be done as soon as possible after the injury. If this is not done, the person would find it difficult to live fully again. In addition, when a member of a poor family is injured or disabled, the entire family is in danger of becoming destitute. Apart from losing income, it can lose its treasured possessions such as house and land, furniture and the children's education may be adversely affected. Such a situation can put the family into more debt and even create more poverty in a community.

Support from family and friends is especially important if the person is the breadwinner or the sole provider for the family. Often he or she experiences feelings of helplessness and dependency that may lead to depression. It is therefore important that the affected person learns a new skill as quickly as possible.

Examples of income generating skills include: sewing, craft, computer operation, food processing

From Corentyne CBR

The Corentyne CBR continued their good work in assisting persons with disabilities in that area to make meaningful contributions to their community. Several activities that are beneficial to the community were carried out.

On Saturday May 17, 2003, a Legal Literacy Workshop was held. The facilitator for the programme was Mrs. Waveney Joseph, Councillor and Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) Volunteer.

And during Blind Awareness Month, Marcel Crawford, who is visually impaired, was presented with a food hamper which was donated by members of the Corentyne CBR. Members of the CBR Unit made the presentation at Mr. Crawford's home.

The Carter Centre approved a grant of US\$1500 to the Corentyne CBR to be used in a Networking Project with special focus on Advocacy.

The President of CBR Unit Ms Myrna Trotman and co-ordinator Mrs Hermina Thomas participated in the launching of the Legal Empowerment Source Book on Thursday, 5th June 2003 at the ST. Marks Library and Skills Training Centre at Alness Village on the Corentyne.

EAST BANK

The East Bank Demerara Unit has been meeting regularly for the year.

Several craft workshops were held and experiences were shared. Members were entertained at Splashmins Fun Park Resort on the Linden-Soesdyke Highway. It was a fun-filled day.

The Unit also held a Retreat, attended by about 50 persons, at the Diamond Community Centre on April 23rd. The facilitator was National Chairman, Mr. Gregory Glasgow. Speakers were Dr. P. Doodnauth of the Ministry of Human Services and Ms Julie Lewis for the media.

The Food for the Poor organisation kindly donated a wheel chair to be used by persons visiting the unit. Ms. M. Branker and Ms. M. Davis made the presentation. Dr. Iamei Aowmathi, Mr Gerald Thorne, a self-employed electrician and several overseas visitors were guests at the retreat. We also had an exhibition and sale of craft

The envelope-making project at the **East Coast CBR** started in November 2002 and is scheduled to end by June 2003. Persons with disabilities have been the participants and it is hoped that after the project, participants would in some way gain self-employment.

East Coast Demerara

The Unit at Cove and John continues to function well, however, the Unit at Buxton has been temporarily closed until further notice. Meanwhile, the Unit at Beterverwagting has restarted.

Persons With Disabilities (PWDs) on the East Coast of Demerara took part in the 30th Anniversary CARICOM *Torch Run for Unity*. This activity was held in every CARICOM Member State. Shamraj Cyril, a paraplegic carried the torch for one leg of the run.

The Kuru Kuru Volunter training is still ongoing and the practical aspect of the training would be completed in July 2003. An average of twenty volunteers have been involved.

The Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs) of East Coast Demerara have embarked on a craft project, at the Cove and John Unit. Some of the items produced are woollen animals and embroidered sheets and pillow cases.

The Annual General Members Meeting was held on Sunday 29th June 2003. The following persons were elected to serve on the Executive Committee: Mr. Gregory Glasgow (Chairperson), Ms. Wendy Mitchell (Vice Chairperson), Ms. Patricia Mallay (Secretary), Mr. Sean Thomas (Treasurer) and Ms. Viola Bradford-Charles (Assistant Secretary Treasurer). The Committee members are Mr. Hemal, Mrs. Judith Lepps, Mr. Terrence Dhainy and Ms. Doris Dash.

The Church of Christ at Enmore continues to transport PWDs twice monthly, to church services and their overseas-based medical team is expected to be in Guyana during the month of June and will provide Medical Services especially in the area of eye care.

Life After Injury

A new manual is available for individuals and organisations that assist persons with disabilities in Guyana. Called

The Disabled People Action Group (DIPAG) sponsored by the Bakja Health Movement continues to house and employ a few members of the East Coast DPO.

Region Three

Workshops

Several persons with disabilities, their parents and relatives were given the opportunity to enhance their earning capacity through the conducting of various training programmes including Pastry-making and Joinery. The Pastry-making course was conducted by Ms. Geraldine Cox while the Joinery programme was done by Mr. Terrence Dhainy. At the end of the joinery course, participants were able to construct two cupboards and a table.

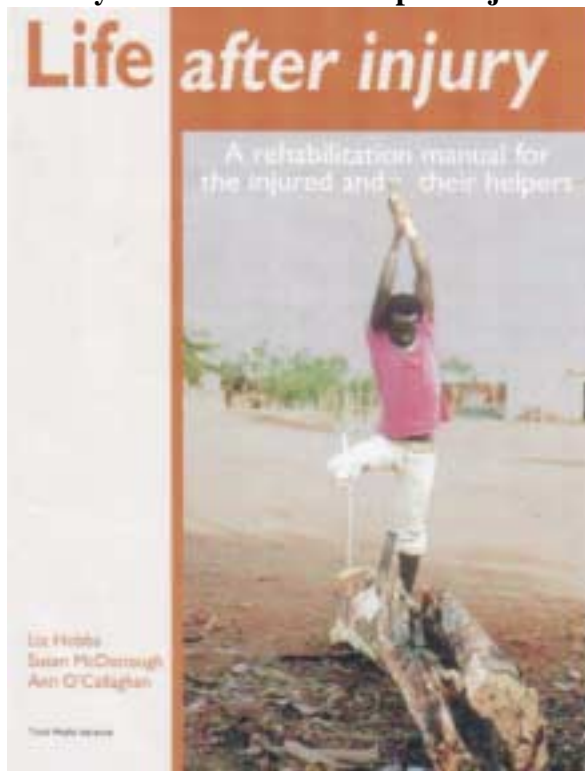
In addition Ms. Merle Sobers, a volunteer, conducts an on-going inclusive education programme for children and young adults.

Life After Injury, the 593-page manual is a joint effort of Liz Hobbs, Susan McDonough and Ann O'Callaghan who are Australian physio and occupational therapists and

published by Third World Network of 121-s Jalan Utama, 10450 Penang, Malaysia.

According to the writers, “the aim of the book is to build sustainable local capacity for rehabilitation at village level in poor countries of the world.”

According to the preface, the book is for everyone who wants to help an injured



person to get up and get going again. The help may take place at the person's home, in a hospital, a clinic, or at a community based rehabilitation programme.

Life After Injury is a must for rehabilitation personnel in Guyana and is ideal as a reference text for persons with disabilities, the relatives and friends. Written after years of research in countries like Cambodia, Ethiopia, Malaysia, Mexico, the Sudan and Thailand, it appears to be tailor-made for Guyana with its estimated 60,000 persons with disabilities.

The book is a practical handbook for people who wish to help persons who have been injured as a result of accidents. It uses hundreds of illustrations and photographs to support its explanations and descriptions that

are written in simple language. The book takes the reader step by step from the event of an injury through emergency care, hospitalisation, learning to carry out daily activities and finally reintegration into the community.

The book also promotes the use of low cost appropriate technology, splints and other aids, training, teamwork and community education. It tells how a person with a disability, his/her family and friends can find strategies to cope with stress and trauma of living with the loss of a limb. More than just telling us how to survive, *Life After Injury* is also about rebuilding lives and about injured and disadvantaged people being able to provide for themselves and their families and fully participate in community life. It does this by guiding readers how to systematically evaluate a disabled person's needs, fears, hopes and possibilities..

Doctors, nurses, rehabilitation workers and occupational therapists will find the book to be a useful tool.

The book also adopts a problem-solving approach as the authors guide the reader in figuring out the unique combination of needs and possibilities for each person. They do this in ways that include the person with the disability, family and friends in the therapeutic process.