

EAG TALK

THE ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS GROUP

An act of honourable service

By Natalya Lawrence

The Antigua and Barbuda Association of Persons with Disabilities (ABAPD) recently secured a grant with the Global Environment Facility Small Grants Programme (GEF SGP). Their project focuses on incorporating climate smart technology to tackle food security and nutrition within the group. This project is particularly important to the group because many of its members are vulnerable and indigent members of society. Much of their project will take place on the grounds of their secretariat at Belmont.

That group, energised by this new project, eagerly began to implement project activities. There was one problem: the grounds of their secretariat span some three acres of tall bushes and weeds, which made it near impossible for physically restricted members of the group to traverse the property.

This is where the Boys' Brigade of Antigua and Barbuda stepped in to assist. Because of the ongoing pandemic, this usually vibrant group of young men had unfortunately put their volunteer work on hold, indefinitely. When I approached Captain Campbell Coates, he admitted that the group had ceased meeting for a time, as they did their part to halt the spread of Covid-19 that was upending lives



The project focuses on incorporating climate smart technology to tackle food security and nutrition (Photos by Natalya Lawrence)



across our country. He said that he would discuss at the next group meeting and come back with a decision. Let me say here, that the Boys' Brigade is the most dependable and admirable group I have ever worked with. They stand by their word and fulfill their promises. I could mark my calendar by Captain Coates, and true to his word, he got back to me, confirming that the

boys would be stepping in to give the grounds of the ABAPD a much-needed facelift. We were taking advantage of a window, a drastic drop in the Covid-19 cases, for the boys to come out and support the ABAPD. This would be their second group act of service since the onslaught of the pandemic.

Captain Coates promised that on November 20th, 2021, the Brigade would be on the

ABAPD's grounds at sunrise, working until midday. How to get a group of boys up and at the site at the crack of dawn is the commander's secret to tell, but there they were, safely spread across the grounds of the ABAPD's headquarters, giving it their all to clean up the compound. A dozen boys, ably guided by their three equally hard-working leaders — Captain Campbell M Coates and Lieutenants Elgin Cornwall and Marlon Hunte — attacked the bush and scrub on the grounds, leaving an aesthetically polished, tame lawn in their wake.

I remember being struck by several things that morning as I watched (and helped a bit!). The boys worked hard under a merciless sun, and they worked as a team, supporting one another. The boys were respectful and humble. They were exceedingly modest as they received my thanks, and took short breaks, eager to finish the work they had come to do. The leaders led by example, and it was obvious that the boys held their leaders in very high esteem. My heart was bursting with a slew of emotion: could it be possible that in a world where values and kindness were fast-losing popularity, here in our tiny country, a small group of boys were showing me that there still was good left? I will never forget the expressions on the association members' faces. There they

were lined up, some with crutches, several in wheelchairs, one who was unable to hear or speak, and one who suffered with a mental disability. They were all smiling and doing their best to assist in any way possible, but the most rewarding part was to watch them, in wheel-

chairs and on crutches, discovering parts of the land where they had never visited, or hadn't in a long, long time.

A simple act of kindness goes a mighty long way. There are no words to express our thanks to the Boys' Brigade of Antigua and Bar-

buda for their support of the ABAPD's project. The boys undoubtedly lifted the spirits of the group. Even more than that, they supported the members' project as they seek to establish a fruit orchard and plant nursery, combating hunger and poor nutrition, giving the group much

needed life-skills, and an opportunity to socialise, and finally supporting the group as they do their part to contribute to the biodiversity conservation through the work of the orchard.

Many thanks to these outstanding, hardworking young men, for their service!



ST LUCIA: Chastanet accuses Pierre of lying about economic situation SLP inherited

Opposition leader Allen Chastanet has accused Prime Minister Philip J Pierre, also Minister of Finance, of continuing to 'deliberately lie' about the economic situation he inherited.

The opposition leader's Facebook comments came in response to remarks Pierre made to a news conference asserting, among other things, that Chastanet's United Workers Party (UWP) had left the current labour administration the task of rescuing Saint Lucia from financial



Prime Minister Philip J Pierre (left) and Opposition Leader Allen Chastanet

and economic disaster.

According to Pierre, this followed a five-year period of reckless borrowing and spending and an unprecedented level of corruption.

However, Chastanet noted that in a June 30th, 2021 Media release, the Caribbean Information and Credit Rating Services Limited (CariCRIS), an independent regional body, published a statement reaffirming 'adequate creditworthiness' ratings for the Government of Saint Lucia.

"CariCRIS has also maintained a stable outlook on the ratings. The stable outlook is premised on our expectation of strong construction activity and a partial recovery in tourism in 2021, and that debt to GDP would not breach the current rating category's limit. Furthermore, we expect that debt to GDP would plateau with borrowings for the Hewanorra International Airport redevelopment but would thereafter decline," the opposition leader quoted the regional organisation as saying.

Chastanet asserted that a simple google search could confirm the statement.

And on the matter of corruption, Chastanet called on Pierre to start within the ranks of his own cabinet if he is serious about tackling the issue. (*St Lucia Times*)

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