
The occasion marked the scale-up of the GRCS ‘Come Closer’ Campaign to increase our efforts in the reduction of Stigma and Discrimination in our society.

St. Stanislaus College emerged winner of the contest, defeating 11 other participating schools from Regions Three (Essequibo Islands/West Demerara) and Four (Demerara/Mahaica), each of which were required to speak on a different topic under the global theme ‘Universal Access, Human Rights’.

In opening the proceedings, GRCS HIV and AIDS Field Officer, Apollo Kanhai, said it is part of the effort, by local and international partners, to increase awareness by placing the focus on educating and empowering young people to take lead roles in addressing this issue. Emphasizing the importance of youth involvement, he noted: “this way, we can have youth speak to their peers, who would listen and interact with them, this way rapidly multiplying the effect of persons adopting attitudes promotes the reduction of stigma and discrimination”.

Questions like ‘How HIV affects the body?’, ‘Should teachers who are HIV positive be allowed to teach?’, ‘Should people living with HIV be made to live separately from us?’, ‘What is the significance of World AIDS Day?’, ‘How social pressure affects persons living with HIV/AIDS?’, ‘How is HIV spread?’, ‘Should HIV positive persons be allowed to access public education?’, ‘How HIV is not transmitted?’, ‘Should parents and teachers of children who test HIV positive be notified?’, and ‘Should school children have the right to access condoms?’.

Chief Judge, Ms. Bonita Hunter (Lecturer of University of Guyana) applauded the youth participating and noted: “You need to act as ambassadors and share the message of HIV awareness and education to your peers.”

Prizes included trophies, gift voucher, certificates and hampers; as well as a notebook computer for the top winner.

GRCS also used this opportunity to mount a display for students and persons in attendance to an overview of the programmes and works done in the various departments.
Patron of GRCS, President Bharrat Jagdeo

With the primary aim of promoting capacity building within the National Society, the GRCS hosted a three-day volunteer development training from October 27 to 29 at the Georgetown Club.

Facilitated by Jill St John and Kester Deverteuil, both from the Office of the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (IFRC) in Trinidad and Tobago, the programme had 25 registered participants, all of whom are a part of the GRCS team.

Ms. Ava Singh, Volunteer Coordinator noted that the goal is to build the existing groundwork by targeting the Department Heads from various regions countrywide. "We want to nourish the volunteering spirit, with the hope that whatever is imparted during the workshop will be passed on to the other volunteers in the respective Branches.”

She also explained the workshop is timely since International Volunteer Day will be observed on December 5th and the knowledge gained could encourage an increase in volunteers.

“We are creating a base for humanitarian volunteering in Guyana and it is hoped that this workshop will contribute to the success of that vision,” Singh stated.

Volunteers at the workshop were enthusiastic about discovering the structure of Volunteer Management and how it can further develop the various programmes of the GRCS. Volunteer Roxanne Dey explained “the knowledge I was exposed to here, has excited me and has motivated me to be a better volunteer, and I will most definitely pass this knowledge to my fellow volunteers.”

St. John disclosed that the donor agency, the European Union (EU) also expects that the execution will promote better preparedness of volunteers, who will in turn contribute to safer communities.

In 2010 five volunteers/staff have been deployed on eight missions, in response to the Haiti Earthquake and Hurricane Tomas.

GRCS hosts Volunteer Development Training

A group at the workshop preparing their presentation

"Volunteering is an invaluable resource requiring a lot of man hours and we realize that many organizations will not be able to survive with out their service.”

Participants at the workshop
Community Based Health & First Aid in Action—National Roll Out

The GRCS rolled out the Community Based Health and First Aid in Action nationally in December 2010 at their headquarters, Eve Leary Kingston.

The National roll out consisted of participants from the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Amerindian Affairs, Civil Defence Commission, the Mother’s Union, the Lusignan and North Sophia Community Disaster Response Teams (CDRT’S) of Regions 1 and 9. The aim of exercise was to prepare national volunteers to be the change agents in communities countrywide.

At the opening, Secretary General, Mrs. Dorothy Fraser noted that “this is a continuation of projects already underway, using different approaches, as we want to make sure that in all of the outreaches across the region the CBHFA approach is used.”

Mrs. Fraser also indicated that community involvement is of importance, especially at the advent of the rainy season when several health and environmental issues may arise within communities and members need to be aware of their responsibilities.

Ms Claudia Lie-A-Tsoen, Training Coordinator from the Suriname Red Cross facilitated along with Mrs. Norma Hamilton (Assistant First Aid Coordinator, GRCS), Patricia Hercules (Field Officer, Region 1, GRCS) and Kerensa Singh (Communications Assistant, Community Based Health & First Aid in Action—National Roll Out)

Participants at the opening of the Programme

The five day programme consisted of seven modules, three of which are standard in all trainings and includes information on IFRC, Volunteering, the National Society and its Local Branches/Chapters, Community Mobilization and Community Assessments. The other modules consisted of First aid, Health, Emergency Management and Supplementary topics such as Road Safety, Voluntary Blood Donations and Substance Abuse.

Participants in the programme were exposed to a “learning by doing approach” which included innovative techniques, like simulations, storytelling, drama, case studies and reflective learning.

Karishma Patel, RC Volunteer and participant from Region 1: “I have attended many trainings/programmes, this approach is different and interactive, I like the techniques used. I believe that this approach will definitely benefit Region 1, since the literacy challenges, using the learning by doing approach along with the community tools.”

Ms. Lie-A-Tsoen, noted “that the goal is to create community awareness and we are now seeing progress with this approach.”

Volunteers in Regions 1 and 9 who participated in the five day programme are now preparing to conduct community meetings and community trainings in their respective regions.

Participants during their presentation

Participants during a role play on communication barriers.
Blood Recruitment in 2010

Blood Donor - De Vaughn Lewis shows off his blood booklet.

Blood Donor Apollo Kanhai at December's Blood Drive.

The GRCS has successfully achieved and surpassed its recruitment of voluntary blood donations for 2010.

Blood Drives were held on the second Tuesday of every month at the GRCS Headquarters, Eve Leary Kingston and also off site. The off site locations were Marian Academy and Mae’s Schools.

There were a number of new donors in 2010, some who are current Red Cross volunteers and staff in other departments and who have since vowed to continue donating in 2011.

"You can make a difference between an adequate or a shortage blood supply."
Please pledge to save at least 3 lives a year!

I’m a voluntary blood donor because it’s healthy for me and I feel great knowing that I’m helping to save lives.

I started donating Blood via the GRCS’s monthly blood drive in 2010, and thus far have donated five units of Blood. I learnt about the Blood Drive from family and friends who are also part of the GRCS’s monthly exercise. I admire and appreciate the work done by RC. I can remember my first time arriving at the GRCS to donate blood: being greeted by a warm welcome and smiling faces from both staff and volunteers, careful and professional guidance through the blood donation process as this was new to me, and to top it off, I was treated to some very tasty and rejuvenating refreshments, and having thought that was it, I was given some tokens (key rings, stickers, etc.). Having donated blood five time already, I do intend to continue and to encourage more persons to join in the effort to save lives and spread hope to other in need. Giving blood does not cost the donor a dollar, it is free and safe, and healthy too. Healthy for the donor and lifesaving for the recipient. Giving blood give you a sense of value and makes you feel good inside out.
Reaching out to the vulnerable - Wreath of Smiles

An Annual Event the “Wreath of Smiles” in a Guyana Red Cross Project which targets the many underprivileged children who rarely receive a gift in their lives, much less at Christmastime.

In this programme a gift tag is prepared with the first name and age of the child, and then distributed to commercial businesses. The names of children are sent to the GRCS from selected schools and community leaders in and around Georgetown.

The distribution of the gift tags is quite a unique one, organizations with Christmas Trees are laden with gift tags and customers visiting these entities for then select a card or cards.

Suitable gifts are purchased and then delivered to the GRCS and are later distributed to the respective schools and orphanages.

Volunteer Coordinator - Ava Singh along with youth volunteers sharing delivering gifts from the Wreath of Smiles Programme
Meet volunteer - Melisa Alstrom

“I enjoy volunteering for the knowledge, experience and exposure that it provides, it is fun and challenging working along with other young people and the general public.”

It is my belief that volunteering comes naturally to me and is a part of me. I grew up in an orphanage–Alpha Children’s Home. I lived in the orphanage since I was five years old, the values and education instilled in me, came from the selfless care givers of the home. At an early age I began helping to care for the younger children and babies in the orphanage, so I think this is where my passion for children comes in as well. Caring for children, I believe is my major strength, this is why I taken the opportunity to pursue my studies in this arena.

I began volunteering with RC about 2 years. I started as just a regular volunteer giving my hours of service but fell in love with it and have given the opportunity to be part of the many programmes of the RC over time. I became an instructor in first aid and fundamentals of health and this year I made the decision to become a voluntary blood donor as well.

My passion is really empowering people with knowledge to be able to help themselves and their communities.

I think volunteers are here for the same reasons, we tease a lot and have fun, but when it’s time to get down to work, we get down to work.

One of my favorite memories was following the Haiti Earthquake. We were all part of the RC Street Collection, when a gentleman from in the street stopped to make his contribution, he used that opportunity to say how much he appreciated the RC and was sure his donation was placed into good hands. It was a goose bump moment for me, and one that made me glad that I was a volunteer.
The GRCS in an effort to raise the much needed funds, create visibility and to encourage healthy lifestyles held a Teddy Bear Ride for Humanity on Dec 5th, 2010.

The ride consisted of three categories from which riders were able to choose from, they included the:

- **Solferino Ride (Family Ride)** which was a ride around the National Park - approximately 3 miles
- **Geneva Ride (Junior/Professional Ride)** which was a ride from RC headquarters to Plaisance - approximately 10 miles
- **Henry Dunant Ride (Veterans Ride)** - from RC headquarters to Hope Turn on the East Coast - 35 miles.

Riders showed up in their numbers from the youngest who is 2 years old named Chad. Chad turned to the champion rider for the event having insisted in continuing his ride even after the rain poured on the Dec 5th morning.

Patrons from numerous cycle clubs were in attendance as well and they in particular took part the Henry Dunant Ride (35 miles).

The Minister of Labour, Mr. Manzoor Nadir who was in attendance and spoke with volunteers and riders, he noted that “I’m very happy to be a part of this event, though I’m not riding, however it’s my belief that the GRCS is contributing significantly to the safety and health aspects of our nation, with the programmes and awareness they create.”

Minister Nadir took the opportunity to wish the volunteers a happy volunteer day since it was being celebrated and to continue their humanitarian endeavours.

Mrs. Dorothy Fraser noted at the opening “we are hoping to make this an annual event and we thank you and look forward to your continued support in this and at our numerous programmes and activities throughout the coming year.”

Each rider and supporter of the event was asked to donate a teddy bear which in turn will be donated to the children at various Institutions.
Upcoming Events

♦ GRCS Coffee Morning & Book Sale
♦ Be Safe Refresher Trainings - Feb
♦ GRCS Blood Drive - 8 Feb
♦ Marian Academy Blood Drive - 14 Feb
♦ Children’s Mash Parade - 19 Feb

LOOK OUT FOR:

♦ CHBFA Community Meetings in Regions 1 & 9
♦ Training of CBHFA Volunteers in Regions 1 & 9.
♦ Be Safe Community Workshops in March– Regions 1—10
♦ Be Safe Teachers’ Trainings - April
♦ Volunteer Orientation Continues

♦ GRCS Raffle
♦ GRCS Spaghetti Night
♦ Be a star - Blood Drive
♦ UG Blood Drive

Volunteers are the heart of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, contact your local Red Cross Society to find out how you can get involved.

The Guyana Red Cross Society

“Improving the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the Power of Humanity.”

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The Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement is guided by seven (7) fundamental

♦ Humanity
♦ Impartiality
♦ Neutrality
♦ Independence
♦ Voluntary Service
♦ Unity
♦ Universality

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