

Persons Associated with Visual Impairment

Date: Saturday 3rd October, 2015

Event Name: "A Time for PAVI"

Venue: PAVI's Office

1st Roundtable "History of PAVI"

1st Speaker Mr. Bhawani Persad

Mr. Persad started his presentation with the date that PAVI was established which was October 26th, 1995. Its first meeting was held downstairs the central bank then it moved to the upstairs where PAVI hosted its first fundraiser which attracted 200 persons. Mr. Persad added that within the first 6 months of opening PAVI became a member of the Caribbean Council for the Blind, he also spoke to the voting rights issue now resolved allowing persons with a visual impairment to vote independently. PAVI officially opened its doors at #76 EMR, San Juan in August 1996. In July 1996 PAVI started its radio programme on 730 am as a means of raising awareness. PAVI went on to receive sponsorship from the Ministry of Community Development via the Community Development fund for their Youth Skills Training Programme. PAVI soon after became a member of CODO.

2nd Speaker Mr. Cyril Scott

Mr. Scott stated that the birth of PAVI was in thought way back to the basket weaving days at Blind Welfare. He further stated that 20 years ago they believed that persons should be placed first rather than their blindness or disability so it should not come as something new or surprising. He passionately described how many lives were touched in various regions of Trinidad since PAVI's establishment. With limited resources PAVI continued to persevere.

3rd Speaker Mr. Raphael Maule

Mr. Maule gave a full synopsis of PAVI's early beginnings. Stating that, PAVI is a non-governmental, non-profit organization. It was launched on October 26, 1995, at the lower floor of the Central Bank, Eric Williams Financial Complex. PAVI was accepted as a member of the Caribbean Council for the Blind in April 1996, following which, it established its offices in August 1996, at 76 Eastern Main Road, San Juan (upstairs Kadmin's Pharmacy) It is the first service-delivery organization in the Caribbean to be established and run by persons with visual impairment. The Organization's major focus is its community-based adjustment-to-blindness programme. It is also involved in the delivery of advocacy, eye care and prevention, awareness programmes, and the whole spectrum of work surrounding blindness. Over the past twenty (20) years, PAVI has touched the lives of thousands of persons through its programmes and services, including its radio programme which it produced for eighteen (18) years. Directly, through its adjustment-to-blindness programme, it has enabled over 600-700 persons who have lost sight to continue living meaningful lives, many of whom are contributors to the development of the national community.

Open Floor Comments

Andrea Brown Collins- Thankful for PAVI's presence and establishment

Edelia Bissessar- Thankful for PAVI's support and its work

Cecille Alves- Thankful for PAVI and its openness to allow her benefit from the organization

Marlon Parieaho- Expressed deepest gratitude toward PAVI

Janelle Findlay- Expressed deepest gratitude toward PAVI

Governance & Awareness- Mr. Persad

Mr. Persad commended PAVI on having a good governance & Constitution. He further stated that PAVI is not a one man show, the organization allows room for development it is one where everyone has an equal opportunity to vote (in PAVI's general meeting) once requirements are satisfied. He stated that several activities were conducted to increase awareness through various mediums but, he urged congregation to become ambassadors of awareness.

10 years Rehabilitation & Adjustment to Blindness work- Mr. Maule

Mr. Maule gave credit where it was due to long serving members who contributed time and effort to PAVI's overall development. He spoke to the training programme for field officers offered by the CCB. He mentioned the three programmes undertaken for persons with Visual Impairment across the region from 1996-1998. The successful training of four (4) Adjustment to Blindness Officers, he mentioned that even the Ministry of Social Development sent a social worker to be trained under this programme. Through this crucial programme, PAVI was able to reach more and more people. By 2005, PAVI had rehabilitated 600 persons and indirectly through its radio programme and other services thousands have been touched. Additionally, eight (8) support groups were formed as a means of reaching others.

Struggles and Challenges PAVI has faced- Mr. Scott

Mr. Scott stated that in the beginning there were a lot of talk rather than doing until Mr. Maule mustered the strength not knowing where another pay check was coming from to open PAVI's doors as he believed more could be done. Mr. Scott mentioned that persons took monies out of their own pockets to fund PAVI, even our very own Mr. Maule. He informed the audience that there were months where Rent couldn't be paid, staff members were left without salaries, no phones and no computers for months. The only support PAVI received was from good, kind hearted citizens who supported the organization and its work. Eventually, the CCB pulled the funding of the rehabilitation officers which led PAVI with a tough decision of sending home their most valued employees. Mr. Scott went on to state that the office was robbed of the assistive devices purchased for resale. He then stated that the Government subvention was received in 2009 and that despite the struggles and challenges that PAVI has faced over the years the organization will continue to survive and thrive.

Open Floor Comments

Marlon Parieaho- Recommended that all this information should be documented as it is important that we remember where we came from and where we are at now.

Andrea Brown Collins- Recommended an audio recording of history

Joseph Vatour-La Placeliere-Made comment

Janelle Findlay- Mentioned other persons responsible for PAVI's development

Obioma Bankole- Mentioned other persons responsible for PAVI's development

2nd Roundtable “The Relevance and Reality of PAVI”

PAVI and Fundraising Ms. Candice John

“Fundraising is a gentle act of giving” Henry Roscoe

Ms. John enlightened the audience that we need funding for AB programme, enhancement & empowerment and early intervention programme. She stressed on the importance of conducting proper research about clients and members so that they can be dealt with in ways that are pertinent to their situation. She gave the audience feedback concerning how PAVI’s funds are generated; through subvention, membership dues, corporations, grants, individual donations, annual fundraisers, walk-a-thons and sale of various items. Additionally, she suggested other avenues for funding; hosting bingo, cards tournament, brunch, triathlon and by selling own merchandize.

Adjustment to Blindness work and the need for it Mrs. Sandra Tamby-Russell (Presented by Ms. Saaraa Ali)

The Adjustment to Blindness programme enables persons to use new techniques and technology to adapt to being blinded. Ms. Tamby’s report was detailed in that it gave statistical information from the previous Adjustment to Blindness Coordinator the late Ms. June Ryan who served approximately 200 clients during her tenure at PAVI. The report stated that for this quarter PAVI’s one rehabilitation officer has served 45 persons of which 10 is currently enrolled in PAVI’s Youth Skills Training Programme. She stated some drawbacks where 30 referrals were not served because of a lack of rehabilitation officers. 15 of these referrals did however visit PAVI’s office. The report went on by addressing the upcoming ABO training programme where PAVI hopes to train 6 persons of which 3 will be selected to be employed at PAVI as Adjustment to Blindness Officers. Currently, PAVI is working in collaboration with the National Training Agency to certify the ABO programme; the logistics are still being sorted out. A new support group has been formed in Port of Spain, there are currently 16 members. The AB coordinator hopes that in the future more groups will be established and a volunteer group be developed in a database to assist and when called upon can train clients in various aspects of rehabilitation.

PAVI & the relationship with the Government- Ms. Asenath Mc Ewen

“Let’s do this together” is the statement Ms. Mc Ewen opened her presentation with. Ms. Mc Ewen stated that PAVI has the opportunity to deepen its relationship with the government. The income generated in the past was not sufficient to cover expenses. Ms. Mc Ewen mentioned the various ministries that PAVI has collaborated with over the years. The Youth Skills Programme which was funded by the Ministry of Community Development, Employment Project- Min. of Labour, Nipping it in the Bud- Min. of Health and presently, the government subvention- Min. Social Development and Family Services. Additionally, she hopes that the formation of relationships will allow PAVI to obtain the contract to provide rehabilitation services at Carlsen Field Enrichment Centre. She closed by saying that PAVI differs in that it offers something unique that is why the government chooses to partner with us.

Open Floor Comments

Joseph Vatour-La Placeliere

Tricia Bruce Phillip

Yvette Francis

Bhawani Persad- Questioned was asked pertaining to AB Programme (Saaraa Ali responded)

Candice John
Marlon Parieaho

*PAVI to arrange programmes for persons over 40+ (Also research TTRP for those over 55)

3rd Roundtable “PAVI’s Future”

Marlon Parieaho “Technology and persons with Visual Impairment”

Technology makes you do things more efficient Mr. Parieaho said. Your cane is technology and you may not even realize it. Technology assists us to do things in a different way. The Maverick application was developed to assist persons who are visually impaired with money reading. Mr. Parieaho reminds that the change begins with you. He urged the audience to share information and knowledge gained to help each other rather than keeping valuable information for oneself. He stated that there is need to show how efficient a person who is visually impaired can be. People need to look past the disability. “Each one to teach one” Be Advocates!

Tricia Bruce- “Dreaming for PAVI”

Mrs. Bruce-Phillip gave a series of points on dreaming for PAVI. They are as follows:

- To see PAVI grow in subvention and staffing
- To have more young people on PAVI’s executive. To which she encouraged the young persons present to take up the mantle and serve.
- We need to be advocates, there is a lack of knowledge as awareness needs to be brought to the forefront.
- Members should be motivated to be tech savvy. We must embrace technology as a good thing.
- A committee to be formed for legislation to discuss. To have equal opportunity.
- PAVI merges with other NGO’s to form stronger relationships
- Education- PAVI needs to be more evolved to form a pre-school as part of Early Intervention Programme. Proposal to revisit for CXC.

Sharon Campbell- PAVI’s Vision, Mission & Plans

Ms. Campbell shared the vision statement with the audience as she began her presentation “Persons with visual impairment are accepted, respected and afforded equal opportunity in all aspects of life.” Additionally, Ms. Campbell shared some words coming out of the mission statement which were words like empowerment, made independent, to provide education on blindness prevention. She stated that the mission statement is to be revised. Ms. Campbell went on to share PAVI’s plans for the upcoming year based on the strategic plan developed in collaboration with Veni Apwann. She stated that plans are in motion for the AB programme to have enough rehabilitation officers, to serve more persons, to reach more persons. She mentioned that PAVI is also aiming at reaching children with Visual Impairment to be given a foundation on blindness. Ms. Campbell informed the audience that the US Embassy has accepted the proposal on People First Language where a calendar will be designed to assist PAVI in raising awareness. Ms. Campbell shared some personal dreams where she hopes that PAVI can establish radio and TV programmes to reach the wider community. Additionally, she stated that it would be a dream to have centres in more areas across the region specifically to assist others living with depression; to help cope with blindness. Ms. Campbell ended her presentation by stating that she wishes to see the words Friendship and Seeking be included in the mission statement.

Open Floor Comments

Romona Maharaj- Students that have completed the YTEPP cooking class programme can start their own Catering Company as a form of income generation, pursue having a spot on GISL to promote and raise awareness

Tricia Bruce- Responded to a question

Obioma Bankole- Made comment