

BHTA launches Environmental Charter

IN its continued efforts to protect the environment, the Barbados Hotel and Tourism Association (BHTA) has launched an Environmental Charter aimed at reducing the amount of plastic used on the island.

Chairman of the BHTA, Roseanne Myers, explained that the Association recognised the increasing threat the excessive use of plastic products was having on the island's environment and public health.

She said, "Thousands of plastic bags, styrofoam boxes and a large number of related products are discarded by Barbadians daily and many of them end up blocking our drains, clogging our beautiful gullies and smothering our coral reefs.

"As an Association we wanted to play our role in assisting with the reduction of this use and the launch of our Charter is the first step. We will be looking at renewables and other environmental con-

cerns in the near future."

During the launch of the Charter at the BHTA's recent Quarterly General Meeting, the Association's Environmental Committee Chairman, Andre Miller, explained that close to 40 members have signed on so far.

He noted that since 1996 he has been involved in underwater clean-ups across the island and at the time these were annual and collected approximately 100 pounds of garbage, "Now we have several clean-ups a year and we collect thousands of pounds of garbage – mainly plastics, Styrofoam, straws and other non-biodegradable materials. This should be a concern for all Barbadians – we must all do better. As an Association we should be leading the way and this is what we are doing with the launch of this Charter."

By signing the charter BHTA members have committed to reducing the plastic usage in their es-



BHTA's Environmental Committee Chairman, Andre Miller, displaying some of the plastic products found during underwater clean-ups on the island.

tablishments by focusing on a number of practices including avoiding the use of disposable plastic items including cutlery, aprons, hats and Styrofoam; returning guests' laundry in baskets rather than plastic bags and purchasing concentrated cleaning

products in bulk, among others.

They have also agreed to pass on the message by educating employees, guests/customers on ways to reduce plastic use and encouraging them to utilise some of the practices in their homes.

School term starts next week

PUBLIC schools will re-start next week with teachers returning to the classroom next Monday, January 9, and students on Tuesday, January 10.

Term II, also known as the Hilary term, will run for 13 weeks.

Among the highlights of the term will be activities to mark African Awareness

Month, in February, as well as the annual sports events including the National Primary Schools' Athletics Championships and the Barbados Secondary Schools' Athletics Championships.

The second term ends on Thursday, April 6, for children and Friday, April 7, for teachers.

Community engagement vital to recovery process

WHEN preparing for any natural disaster, one of the things which that country's City Coalition for Community Resilience must do, is to ensure that they engage the communities which they will be helping.

This is imperative in helping those communities to recover as quickly as possible after the disaster has passed, stated Daniel Cot, Urban Risk and Community Resilience Coordinator for the IFRC, Regional Office for the Americas.

"The ultimate goal when forming a City Coalition for Community Resilience is to strengthen the ability of communities to bounce back in the face of disasters, natural or otherwise. This means that the Coalition will need to work directly with communities to identify and implement strategies for local resilience building."

In order to help these coalitions do this, the "One Billion Coalition" initiative has been developed along with the Resilient Communities Handbook which is aimed at providing these coalitions with a reference in developing and implementing programmes at the community level, stated Cot.

There is also the "One Billion Coalition Community Resilience Marketplace", which is an online tool that helps connect vulnerable populations with organisations that can provide them with the equipment

that they need to protect themselves from a natural disaster and recover from such, once it is over.

"Another tool that can help stakeholders and communities interact is the 'One Billion Coalition Community Resilience Marketplace.' The Marketplace is an online platform that helps connect community needs and provide stakeholders with the opportunity to collaborate on and contribute to grassroots projects."

The IFRC Urban Risk and Community Resilience Coordinator explained that if this vulnerable community needs water filters for example, they can post this need on the platform. Similarly, if there is an organisation that is willing to provide these water filters, then they can post this on the platform and connect with local communities who need them.

"For example, if a community identifies that they need water filters to have access to cleaner drinking water and prevent health issues, they can create a post on the platform and share the need with potential local partners. And vice versa, if there is a company that would like to make an in-kind contribution of water filters as part of the Corporate Social Responsibility programme, the company can post this on the platform or reach out to the community that needs them." (PJT)

Gilkes: Decision made to redevelop Sam Lord's Castle over Marina

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He pointed out that the country has not reached where it wants to but it continues to take action. "So all of these things are being done to make Barbados more desirable for yachting, and it is not just about a Marina," he maintained.

Gilkes also explained that Barbados had to make a choice between building a Marina and redeveloping Sam Lord's Castle. The decision was taken to go ahead with the 450-room project at Sam Lord's Castle.

The BTMI Consultant Gilkes has predicted that this year will be a better one for sailing and yachting.

By the end of this month some 80 yachts are expected to be in the island. (JB)



According to BTMI consultant Peter Gilkes, Sam Lord's Castle, pictured here in its former glory before it was consumed by fire in 2010, was chosen to be redeveloped by Barbados instead of building a Marina.