

THE Give Back Programme launched by the Ministry of Education in February wants you! Yes, you! We would like you to join this Give Back programme. The programme pairs volunteers with companies or organisations, and is open to all those willing to take on students mandated to work up to 150 hours per academic year, to pay back their college tuition. Students are chosen according to their area of study and if best suited to a particular company and its line of work. If interested, it's easy to apply; Just fill out the application form on the GIVEBACK website: Givebackbarbados.com.

## Payback by giving back

**W**HAT would you do if someone gave you the opportunity to attend college or university for free? Besides the obvious gleeful celebrating that would ensue, if you're a Barbadian student you would be required to give back some of your free time volunteering at different entities across the island.

Thanks to the Government, perspective students now have the option of attending the University of the West Indies, Barbados Community College or the Erdiston Teachers' Training College free of charge, but with one simple caveat - Full time students must give back 150 hours of community service and part time students, 100 hours of community service.

That's the mandate of the Give Back programme which was launched back in February by the Minister of Education, Santia Bradshaw. "We see this investment in education as having a consequential civic responsibility. This is a national campaign which is wider than education, it is hoped that this initiative will become the catalyst for a national

movement which will inspire Barbadians of all walks of life to give back." Costly tuition fees that often lead to back-breaking student loans have deterred many a student from pursuing a college education. While most things in life often come at a cost, this seems like a small price to pay to attain a college degree.

Unlike students in other countries who leave university with the equivalent of mortgages to be repaid, and hundreds of dollars in student loan debt - here in Barbados - once your community service hours are complete, your debt is repaid in full. It's that simple. No years of compounded interest payments. And most importantly, no debt!

Call it an investment in human capital, but the Barbados Government sees the GIVE BACK programme as continuing its commitment to free tertiary education that has been deeply rooted in the fabric of this island. But it also inspires those who have benefitted, to give back to their country to help pave the way for future generations.

## Volunteering

It's the right thing to do



By Corey Layne

**C**UB SCOUTS always do their best, think of others before themselves, and do a good turn every day - that was the law I repeated weekly from the age of seven years old and has become a part of me.

I also remember at nine years old starting the Ravens Club among my cousins mimicking game shows I saw on television. It was the beginning of a great life of volunteerism.

The past 22 years have been very rewarding and as I reflect, here are a few of these things I want to share. Volunteering truly opens doors. Every opportunity that has presented itself over these years was a direct result of having a foot in the door or being in the right place at the right time.

Volunteering creates super networks. Many of my successes can be traced to the ability to call on persons previously assisted or persons I have connected or cooperated with in the past. The power of great networks could never be overstated in a system that is so heavenly dependent on having them.

Volunteering creates a fulfilling feeling that so many people are in search of. Many times people lament feeling a void that nothing fills. I have had the absence of that feeling and I attribute it to the joy unspeakable and overflowing joy of doing good, assisting people, and watching them grow and doing their best.

Volunteering is the right thing to do. When we consider the combination of things above, the only conclusion one can or should arrive at is that volunteering is truly the right thing to do.

Even consider the fact that so many graduates with varying degrees try to make themselves stand out among a pile of applications. At the same time, many HR specialists and managers point to the fact that participation in and volunteering in benevolent ventures, has been one of the greatest determining factors when looking to distinguish between two similarly qualified candidates.

The paradox of volunteerism is that it is truly a most selfless act and selfish act at the same time. While one makes sacrifices to perform service for others, the certain truth is that it is one of the most self-satisfying feelings.

(Corey Lane is radio moderator and Volunteer for Life).



## Playground to test out a career

By Shalisha Samuels

**S**O you've been invited to join an organization or have been invited to volunteer. Your first thoughts are "Sorry but I need a job", "I'm in school right now" or "I don't have the time."

Here's a secret: being a volunteer brings you closer to your career path and can in many ways better prepare you than school, or an actual job.

Volunteering is a fire free, pink slip free zone to test out a career. You have more opportunities to make mistakes and learn from them. It's hard and unwise to use your job as a playground.

As a rule of thumb for life; volunteer in the area of your desired career path before paying for studies.

Ask a graduate how they wished they saved that \$80,000 on law school! So it's either 5 months volunteering at the nearby clinic, or 7 years of regretful med school.

Gardening, engineering, teaching or social media; you are sure to find a company that will welcome you. If you remain passionate while doing work in a sector for free, you may be on to something.

You can also take on an internship, or even discover a career path or avenue to make money you never thought of as well.

And guess what? By this time, you would have racked up more experience than your degree only peers. Perfect!

(Shalisha Samuels is an attorney-at-law, who has done much volunteer work while still a student at UWI, and still does)



## Back on board after break

SINCE the rollout of the GIVEBACK programme in February 2020, some of its efforts had to be curtailed because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Now non-profit and charitable organizations such as the Duke of Edinburgh's International Awards are back in the throes of interviewing potential volunteers to come on board.

"We now have three volunteers from UWI and we have a couple of other people interested, so we're planning orientation sessions," said Fabian Norville of the Duke of Edinburgh International Awards. "We saw it as an opportunity to get additional people to work to help expand our outreach, and hopefully develop the soft skills useful in their own lives."

### NON-PROFIT ON BOARD

Israel Mapp of Union Collaborative, a non-profit organization, says its an excellent programme which gives the students much-needed work experience. Union Collaborative will utilize student volunteers in coming weeks to help transform 12,000 square foot space into creative spaces for individuals.

"Volunteers would help in gardening for the courtyard, putting murals on the outside of the building," Mapp said.

"This programme would help them tap into their passion and let them connect with the work so that they feel compelled to return to the work even after their community service hours are finished." Mapp also hopes that this programme would help to bolster a passion for vol-



Daniel Alleyne, student volunteer.

unteering which he finds lacking within society.

"Volunteering is not something that's within our culture," Mapp says. "I'm really hoping that the Give Back programme really helps to shift that concept."

For some students, though, while they are eager to participate, they believe the program should also be structured in a way to benefit them.

"It's been very educational. I honestly believe that more entities should be available for you to get experience in the areas that you're studying in," says student volunteer Daniel Alleyne. "It's a way for students to capitalize and also get experience at the same time."

Alleyne, who is studying linguistics, works with the Drug Education and Counselling Services and has been doing more administrative work such as answering the phones and dealing with the Second Chance program. But he believes that steps can be taken to improve the program.

"I don't have a problem with giving back, but there has to be more of an incentive for students," says Alleyne. "If you want the students excited about giving back, then open the options for them to make volunteering more appealing to them."

The Barbados Government maintains that their aim with this programme is to instill a sense of responsibility in its citizens to contribute to the developments of the country through civic responsibility and volunteer service to the communities.