

# the Cayman Spirit



Cayman Islands Government Information Services

Issue 5, Volume No. 1, Friday, 26 December 2004

## Minister Bush Announces Housing Solutions

by Angelique Crowther

Leader of Government Business, the Hon McKeeva Bush, OBE, JP, recently won Cabinet support for a comprehensive emergency recovery plan for the housing sector.

In addition to his responsibilities for Tourism, Environment, Development and Commerce, the Minister has been assigned overall responsibility for Cayman's recovery effort. In this new role, he will be answerable to the Legislative Assembly.

Initiatives approved by the Cabinet include the planned importation of trailer homes to serve as temporary housing, the establishment of work teams to assist with rebuilding in the districts, the pursuit of low-/no-interest loans, and research of alternative source of building supplies.

Mr. Bush stressed that quick, viable solutions are required for displaced Caymanians. "It is recognised that Government does not wish to see any sector of the Islands neglected or unassisted," he said, but noted that the housing issue impacts many critical sections of the Cayman Islands economy and its ability to rebound quickly. "The Government is aware that if we are to sustain our position in the global financial community, we must position ourselves to relocate those personnel and businesses that have temporarily relocated off island," Mr. Bush concluded.

### Plan details include:

1. Acquisition by Government of between 50 and 100 travel trailer homes. The plan specifies that the trailers must meet the specifications of the US Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The estimated cost

is CI\$11,500 each (excluding shipping costs). Government will rent these units to occupants for a moderate fee.

2. Establishment of work groups of approximately ten persons per team to assist in the rebuilding and restoration of homes. The plan calls for 10 teams in West Bay, 30 teams in George Town, 20 teams in Bodden Town, and as needed in other districts. All efforts are to be made to employ Caymanians. Cabinet recommends exemption of current work permit holders from the requirements of obtaining new work permits.

3. Appointment of a project management group to oversee the work groups.

4. Pursuit of low-/no-interest loans through financial institutions such as the Cayman Islands Civil Service Credit Union, Cayman Islands Development bank and the Cayman Islands National Building Society.

5. Research and pursuit of alternative sourcing of building supplies, including non-US jurisdictions, to bring materials to the Cayman Islands faster and at more competitive prices for the Government Housing Grant Scheme being administered by the Cayman Islands Development Bank.

6. Assistance to the National Housing and Community Development Trust and private sector initiatives in moving forward their programmes for the development of temporary and permanent housing in the Islands.

## Government Schools Ask: 'Confirm January Registrations'

All parents and guardians of government school students who are *not* presently in attendance are asked to advise principals whether their child will be returning in January 2005.

This information should be provided by directly contacting the school no later than Tuesday, 7 December. Since the details are critical for planning purposes, all parents and guardians are requested to comply with this request. Failure to do so will seriously affect the child's placement next January.

Some parents and guardians have requested transfers for their children from one Grand Cayman government primary to another Grand Cayman government primary school. These parents are advised that their requests will be considered by 17 December and they will be advised accordingly.

Chief Education Officer, Mrs. Nydia Flatley notes that very few new registrations will be accommodated due to the expectation that most students will return following the Christmas break. Enrolment figures pre-hurricane Ivan were at maximum capacity in most schools.

## Board the Express!

Continued on Page 2

All aboard 'The Express'—a new bus service for professionals who lost their vehicles during Hurricane Ivan—which takes to Grand

Cayman's roads on Monday, 26 November.

'Express' buses will provide punctual, reliable transportation during peak traffic morn-

# Editorial

On Monday all government schools will be back in operation – quite an achievement in the two months since Hurricane Ivan swept through the Islands.

Considering that many of us are still struggling with our personal recovery from Ivan, we salute education officials for working so diligently to arrange the best educational experience for our children. And they have excelled under what are and continue to be very difficult circumstances for all of us.

It is reassuring to also know that top priority was placed on ensuring a safe environment for all our children. *CaymanSpirit* recently learned of evacuation of residents in parts of Florida because of mould-related illnesses. The Ministry of Education has ensured that all local schools have been certified by professional environmental hygienists as free of moulds and other environmental hazards that may occur under disaster conditions.

Beyond that, the education sector has had to overcome the same hurdles that we all do in cleaning up and repairing buildings. *CaymanSpirit* wishes them well on the major rebuilding programme that lies ahead.

That will undoubtedly bring its challenges, but in all of the issues that they have had to resolve, they have been able to assure us that children in all schools save one will have completed at the end of the academic year 186 of the normal 190 teaching days! And for the school that has had the most difficulty in getting back to normalcy, special provision will be made to make up lost time.

The bottom line is that every effort is being made to ensure that our children do not lose ground.

This week's *CaymanSpirit* outlines how the Government's educational system has worked over the hurdles. We believe that this is important, as sometimes it is easy to forget that we are all going through this together. And it is equally important for parents to support school efforts to make up missed time; try to provide a quiet corner for your child, turn the TV off, listen and help as he or she adjusts to school again. Don't leave it all up to the schools.

And remember that Cayman Spirit – it took us to where we are, and we can do it again! It just takes faith and effort! Just do it!

## District Peer Counselling Underway

By Angelique Crowther

The Ministry of Health Services plans to establish a Community-based Peer Counselling programme in each district.

This programme is designed to provide emotional and social support. Individuals participating in the peer counselling sessions will receive information, learn stress management skills and have an opportunity to discuss ways of solving problems as well as to share strategies for coping with difficult situations.

Persons with or without previous counselling experience who are interested in facilitating a District Peer Counselling Group should sign up for a training seminar by calling 949-9000 before December 3, 2004.

### Who should sign up for the training seminar?

- Community representatives
- Teachers
- Human resources professionals with public relations experience
- Ministers
- Parents/PTA members

### What will you learn?

- Why peer counselling?
- How peer counselling is different from traditional therapy
- Common reactions to disaster/ post disaster stress
- Specific reactions to disaster for at risk groups
- Strategies and skills to reduce stress
- Progressive deep muscle relaxation
- Guided imagery and visualization
- Concepts of loss and grief
- Caregiver stress and "compassion fatigue".

### When and where will the training seminar be held?

Dec. 9 (5:00 PM to 9:00 PM)

Dec. 10 (5:00 PM to 9:00 PM)

Dec. 11 (9:00 AM to 6:00 PM)

Location: Conference Room at Cayman Corporate Centre on Hospital Road

## Board the Express!

Continued from Page 1

ing and evening hours, allowing passengers to bypass the stress of having to 'catch a ride.' Passengers can even enjoy a newspaper whilst travelling in air conditioned comfort! Routes identified for 'The Express' are in West Bay, Bodden Town, Prospect and George Town, with drop off points in the Industrial Park and George Town areas.

Originally designed to assist essential services workers, the buses represent a collaborative effort between the Department of Vehicle & Licensing and various private bus operators, with the Department of Tourism as facilitator of the project.

The service will provide new opportunities for private market enterprise and an alternate mode of transportation for the public. It is hoped that 'The Express' will serve to aid discussions by the Transportation Committee under the National Tourism Management Policy.

Bus operators interested in participating in the new system should have valid licenses and insurance, and they can contact the Department of Vehicle & Licensing for additional details. 'Express' brochures, outlining the bus routes and times are being distributed to various government agencies, and are also available at the Department of Vehicle & Licensing and the Department of Tourism. For further information contact the Department of Tourism at 949-0623.

## Contact RC Restoration for Free Removal of Debris

Property owners should call 939-1942 to have Hurricane Ivan debris removed from private property.

Before debris can be removed, however, owners must sign a Right of Entry Form. MC Restoration work crews will also have copies of this form with them as they carry out their duties.

Property owners are asked to assist by separating debris into the following groups: appliances, vegetation, construction debris, and contaminants (such as batteries and household chemicals, etc.).

SHOULD PROPERTY OWNERS NOT REQUEST assistance from the debris removal company, they become obligated to remove debris within a reasonable time period and at their own expense.



# Education Update

## Government High Schools Forge Ahead

By Lynsay Brown

When Year 10 students from John Gray High School (JGHS) returned to classes on Thursday, 24 November, at the Agape Church, they were completing the re-opening of the island's only government senior high school. Years 11 & 12 students from JGHS have already returned to the school site and a longer school day has been introduced to compensate for any missed classes. It is anticipated that all Year 10 students will be able to return to the school site by 1 February.

John Gray High School was very badly hit with up to 90% of its buildings damaged and it is likely that some will have to be demolished. Year 12 students, who are studying for external examinations, were the school's first priority. Extensive initial work was undertaken, allowing them to return to school on Thursday, 21 October.

Following further work, Year 11 students, who are due to start external examination courses for next year, were able to return on Friday, 12 November. This was enabled by the generous offer from George Hicks to use nine rooms in their technology block. Year 11 examination course students were thus able to use the technical and home economics facilities.

Students and staff are working on an extended

timetable to try and catch up on missed work, with a focus on examination subjects. Due to the nature of the Year 11 options systems, a similar shift system considered for other years was not practical.

Priority for the next stage of refurbishment will include the 21 Social Studies rooms, six Maths and English rooms, and some temporary repairs to the technology areas. In addition, 10 modular classrooms, which should be on site by January 2005, have been ordered for the school.

Due to the limited space and resources available, it has been impossible to accommodate the 350 Year 10 students on the school site. Alternative arrangements were made and from Thursday, 24 November, these students relocated to the Agape Church. All classrooms, offices, the youth centre and two areas in the main church sanctuary will be used as teaching spaces to accommodate half a school year at a time. A revised timetable has been written to ensure a broad and balanced curriculum.

George Hicks High School students returned to school beginning Thursday, 18 November. Despite extensive damage throughout the school site, 16 rooms have been restored to a safe and sanitized working state,

accommodating one-year group per day.

By January, it is expected that 24 rooms will be available, allowing half the school to be present at one time. The numbers will allow a shift system operation, permitting all students to attend school daily for either a morning 8am – 12pm shift or an afternoon session from 12.30 – 4.30pm. The Education Department is exploring plans to provide further enrichment activities for students when they are not in school.

Temporary classrooms were considered as a potential solution for George Hicks but it was felt that these would create major health and safety issues. Students would be in close proximity to buildings under-going construction and the site could not cope with 1,000 students, in addition to the extensive construction work that is needed. Students would also have nowhere to go at break time and would lose their PE field.

Other sites for Learning Centres were considered but none were available to cope with the large number of students.

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## Many Partners Aid Recovery

In its thrust to return schools to normalcy the ministry has had many partners.

Within a few weeks of the hurricane, the Public Works Department had assigned a project manager and a construction company for each school and had agreed work specifications for repairs.

Department of Environmental Health officers carried out over 80 health and safety checks to pre-schools, and private and government schools. Remediation specialists from TDC and Industrial hygienist Jennifer Collins provided remediation services to treat mould

and fungus problems and improve air quality in the schools.

Mrs Basdeo also highlighted the contributions of principals and their staff to the recovery process. "They assisted with inventories, cleanups, timetabling, planning and all other preparations that were necessary for our students to return." She pinpointed, for special mention, the work of senior staff at George Hicks and John Gray, the two schools hardest hit by the hurricane. "Working to find enough classrooms, to redo timetables and redeploy teachers has been a logistical night-

mare. However, they have persisted, and I am confident that we are making the best possible provision for our secondary school students, given the severity of our circumstances."

Special accolades also for the contributions of Education Officer for the Sister Islands, Mrs. Mexi-Ann Grant, and of the Brac Principals; at one point in September, there were over 300 Grand Cayman students on the Brac, more than 200 of whom were admitted in Brac schools.

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# Education Recovery

## Phase 2:

### Safety Still Top Priority

Getting children back to school in a safe environment was the goal of the Ministry of Education, which will hit a high point on Monday (29 November) with the launch of Phase 2 of an intensive \$18 million rebuilding programme to continue until the end of the school year.

"Hurricane Ivan has left our government education system particularly hard hit: schools have suffered \$18 million worth of damage to their buildings, and additional millions have been lost in contents," said Minister for Education, the Hon Mr. Roy Bodden, JP.

"We quickly realized that the scale of the damage was such that we would have to focus all available resources on helping our schools and staff to recover," Mr Bodden said. "I assure parents that, from the ministry's perspective, the rebuilding of our schools has always been and remains a national priority, and that all resources available to us were quickly applied to the rebuilding effort."

As part of stage one planning, a target date of 1 Nov was set for the reopening of all schools. The Year 12 at John Gray began earlier, on 21 October. East End Primary School Learning Centre opened on 18 October. The opening of other schools/classes has been staggered, between 25 October and next Monday (29 November) 2004, when all schools will have re-opened, including the Alternative Education Centre.

Permanent Secretary for Education Mrs. Joy Basdeo said: "I know that when reopening dates were changed this caused uncertainties for parents. However, we provided regular advisories and updates for them. Parents need to know that any delays were unavoidable and were always made in the best interests of their children."

Due to a number of ministry initiatives, by the end of the year, government primary schools will come close to providing the usual 190 school days, as will John Gray's years 11 & 12. George Hicks and John Gray Year 10 will have less time in school and the ministry is working with the schools on initiatives to tackle this.

Mrs. Basdeo said that in the post-Ivan weeks and months, efforts were concentrated on cleaning up the schools to ensure that when children returned, they would be safe from

debris and from mould. "I am not sure that many people are aware of the potential impact of 'mouldy' classrooms on children's health. We had to make sure that we did not endanger vulnerable children's health."

Efforts during this period also concentrated on repairing sufficient rooms that could be readily brought on stream for occupancy as soon as possible after Ivan.

Where sufficient classrooms could not be made available, alternative sites were identified and prepared as learning centres. "We were not aiming for 'school as normal', except for our Year 12 examination students, Mrs Basdeo explained. "However, we aimed to provide safe and productive educational environments for our children, so that their parents could get on with the business of rebuilding their lives and our country."

Twenty temporary classrooms were ordered in late September. However, time has to be allowed for their construction and shipping, and the earliest that they can be expected is January 2005.

Repairs to buildings were just one of many areas that had to be tackled before a school could be reopened. Essential facilities had to be in place, such as electricity, sewerage, facilities for food and water, as well as basic health and safety measures.

Classes/teachers had to be prepared and texts and other educational materials secured. Learning centres were often set up in large open spaces that then had to be subdivided. Dividers as well as tables and chairs and other equipment also had to be found.

Mrs. Basdeo also noted that the ministry team faced many challenges as they worked towards the original 1 November target date: there were some contractor issues; problems with getting materials on a timely basis and with obtaining electricity or generators for the schools.

Another major hurdle that delayed the restoration of some schools was their use as shelters. In addition to Prospect, six more schools were being used as shelters: John Gray, George Town, Bodden Town, East End and John A Cumber in West Bay. It was discovered later that in addition to the impact of Ivan, vandalism and theft by shelter residents at Bodden Town Primary had increased damage to the school.

And aside from the buildings, teachers, as the rest of the population, also had their problems: "At the same time, we found out that many of our educational staff had suffered terrible personal losses — to their homes, cars and other possessions. The first survey by the ministry indicated that as many as 79 teachers were

homeless. Recently revised figures now place that figure at around 35," Mrs. Basdeo said.

In addition, the Education Department suffered structural damage and flooding and was declared uninhabitable.

So now, having completed phase one, the ministry is moving ahead with the massive programme of rebuilding the parts of schools that are not habitable at the present time.

The second stage of the rebuilding process is from November to the end of the school year, when all repairs to all schools should be complete. Mrs Basdeo noted, "Of course, as we work towards this target we will face similar challenges to those encountered earlier. In addition, as children are now in schools, we have to continue to monitor to ensure that the rebuilding process in no way poses any danger to the health and safety of the children, or unduly affects their educational progress."

And rebuilding will affect all schools. "Although the extent of damage to schools varies, no school was left untouched," the Permanent Secretary said. "Even Prospect Primary, the new school that opened a few days before the storm, had some damage."

## All Hands on Deck for Recovery

The first step towards normalcy for the Ministry of Education was to establish a central base for communication and decision-making. The base was located in the Schools' Inspectorate offices, which were converted to serve as a meeting place for other departments within the ministry.

Next came the decision to redeploy the staff of the Education Department and the Inspectorate to operate as part of a Ministry team focusing on the recovery effort. Each school was assigned a member of staff from each department to act as a Link Officer, to assist the principal and staff and act as a point of liaison with the ministry and others involved in the rebuilding process.

"And this has worked very well," said Permanent Secretary Joy Basdeo in a tribute to all involved.

## Strategies make up for Lost Time

With stage one of the exercise to resume classes for all children attending government schools completed on Monday (29 November), the Ministry of Education is now focusing on strategies to make up for lost curriculum time.

Come January, Permanent Secretary Joy Basdeo explained, schools will start earlier to provide a longer school day, and the school year will also be extended. The school calendar has also been revised to create more curriculum time. For example, teacher in-service days and some term breaks have been removed; the annual National Children's Festival has been cancelled, and national tests will be replaced by in-house testing and key stage standardized tests.

"The good news", Mrs Basdeo stated, "is that this arrangement will mean that most of our primary school students will only get 3-4 teaching days less than they would normally. So that at the end of the 2004/5 school year, primary students will have attended close to 186 of the normal 190 teaching days."

At the other end of spectrum for government schools, the examination (Year 12) and Year 11 students are also well accommodated, Mrs. Basdeo said.

The ministry's main challenge remains Year 10 at John Gray and George Hicks students, Mrs. Basdeo said, adding that the ministry's recovery team is working with the George Hicks staff to provide an enrichment programme for their students. (See separate story on arrangements for George Hicks and John Gray students.)

"If we can achieve our goal of providing a range of activities to complement, supplement and extend, as necessary, the curriculum to be provided at George Hicks under the new shift system, we will go a long way to making up for some of the learning time that these students will have lost."

To ensure that these challenges are overcome, Mrs. Basdeo stated that between now and December, schools, with the assistance of the ministry recovery team, will be working to review the curriculum in the core subjects, to revise learning goals and to develop strategies for making up lost curriculum time.

"We are asking teachers to prune the curriculum to identify core learning objectives and ways to maximize the learning time available. It is also possible that the catch-up process may have to be spread over more than just one year. Thus primary school teachers will work in key stage groups and the Year 10 teachers will work with their peers from George Hicks," Mrs. Basdeo said.

## Partners in the Recovery Process

*Continued from Page 3*

They coped with the influx "in typical Brac style" Mrs Basdeo noted. They made whatever changes were needed, including converting spaces not normally used as classrooms, regrouping the children, redeploying their teachers, all with "a ton of compassion and sensitivity and a minimum of fuss." However, she also noted that the ministry is well aware of the strains this placed on the schools, most of which just about doubled their student populations overnight.

Following an official visit to Cayman Brac by the Deputy Permanent Secretary, Mrs. Mary Rodrigues, the ministry also set up secondary and primary learning centres for those who could not be admitted into the schools. Staffed mainly by teacher volunteers from Grand Cayman, the centres operated 5-28 October. And could not have become a reality without the generous offer of the use of facilities by the Veterans and Seaman's Association and the Stake Bay Church of God.

"The ministry is grateful for their support, Mrs. Basdeo noted.

## More Information on Handling Damaged Vehicles

Contrary to common theory, it is lawful to purchase and repair a vehicle deemed a 'total loss' by an insurance company. However, before it can be driven it must be insured and inspected. If the vehicle passes inspection, it can be registered and the owner will be given the plates and registration coupon.

Prior to purchasing a 'total loss' or damaged vehicle, interested parties should contact their insurance company to find out if they will agree to cover the vehicle. There is no obligation for an insurance company to cover a damaged vehicle.

If a search of the registration is requested to determine if it was suspended or terminated, the department will charge a fee of C\$75.

For persons who own a damaged or total loss vehicle, please review the information below.

### Disposal & Termination of Registration for Damaged Vehicles

The owner of a vehicle *must* dispose of and terminate the registration of his vehicle if it is damaged beyond repair.

Vehicle Registration Can be Suspended During Repairs

If a vehicle was registered for 12 months and will be out of service due to repairs for longer than three months, the owner can suspend the registration of the vehicle.

Registration can be reactivated once the repairs are complete by requesting in writing the return of the plates and coupon.

### Disposals of Vehicles

Free disposal of vehicles is available with MC Restoration by calling 929-1942. Contact your insurance company to ensure that an appraisal does not need to be done before the vehicle is disposed of.

### Suspension/Termination of Vehicles

The owner of a damaged vehicle can terminate registration by completing the 'Suspension/Termination of Vehicle Licence' form and submitting it to the Department of Vehicle Licensing. With the form, the owner must provide the licence plates, current licence coupon and certificate of registration (log book), upon which the department will issue a certificate of termination. If these items were lost due to the hurricane, the director must be notified in writing.

### Appointing a Local Agent

The owner of a damaged vehicle can appoint a local agent to make application on his behalf. The agent can be any responsible person. If the owner is not in the islands and he chooses to appoint a local agent, the application must be made in writing and the owner must sign the 'Suspension/Termination of Vehicle Licence' form in front of a Justice of the Peace or a Notary Public. The justice or notary must affix his stamp or seal to the application. If a letter explaining loss of coupon or plates is included, this must also be stamped or sealed by the notary or justice of the peace.

# Red Tagging of Vehicles Underway

Owners of abandoned vehicles are again notified that red tagging of unclaimed derelict vehicles on public rights of way has commenced.

Each derelict vehicle will be tagged with a red sticker. This notifies the owner of the intention of the Vehicle and Licensing Department to remove the vehicle to a holding area. The owner will then have 14 days to claim the vehicle. If no contact is made with the Vehicle Licensing Department, and if reasonable steps to identify the owner fail, the vehicle will be disposed of.

If you own a non-functioning vehicle and want assistance to remove it, you must first have the vehicle terminated. To terminate your vehicle, visit the Department of Vehicle Licensing on at one of its three offices – Elgin Avenue, Walkers Road, or West Bay. You may also fax the department at 945-8345.

To have a vehicle removed, contact MC restoration, at 939-1942.

Owners of private property must sign a “Right of Entry Form” to allow the removers to enter the property. Forms may be obtained from MC Restoration at the time of removal.

## Contact Employment Services for Help

The Department of Employment Relations & Employment Services Centre is open and located on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor of the Old Royal Bank Building.

Services include dealing with labour related complaints and mediation, and providing advice to employers and employees on their rights and obligations under the Labour Law (2001).

Call the office on 945-3114 to make an appointment.

# Traffic Signals to Become Fully Automatic

Having completed the restoration of traffic signals at six intersections, Florida-based contractors CSL will return to Cayman for a week in mid-December to complete the repairs and upgrades. This will include fully automatic control, permitting traffic signals to respond to varying traffic conditions. Traffic lights at six of eight intersections are now operational, following one week's work by contractors CSL out of Florida, who finished the job on 19 November.

The two other signals on Harbour Drive at the Museum and at Fort Street will be addressed in conjunction with the planned new tourist terminal. It is possible that those signals may be decommissioned once the termi-

nal is operational, given that it now appears that the public is handling the present three-way stops well.

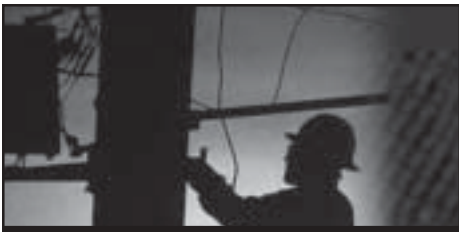
The six restored lights have been improved with LEDs (Light Emitting Diodes), which are more cost-efficient and reliable, with a lifespan of approximately five years. And while the signals currently remain on “fixed” time, the units have been assessed for components needed to switch to full computer monitoring. The signals are also rewired to suit video camera control—the same kind previously in use at the Jacques Scott intersection. That had proved more reliable than other older signals that had utilized detector loops beneath the road surface.

## Status of School Re-openings

- Prior to Nov 1 (the initial target for reopening): 200+ students from Grand Cayman were absorbed by Cayman Brac schools;
- By 7 October, an additional 30+ students were attending either the secondary or primary school learning centre on the Brac, developed especially for these students;
- By 18 October, East End Primary School Learning Centre was opened;
- By 21 October, Year 12 students returned to John Gray;
- By 29 October, Lighthouse School, George Town Primary Learning Centre and J A Cumber school opened;
- By 12 November, all primary schools open, either on school site or at a learning centre; All Year 11 students return to John Gray;
- By 18 November, George Hick students in, one year group at a time;
- By 25 November, John Gray Year 10 return, half of the year group at a time, at the Agape Church;
- By 29 November, Alternative Education Centre open; provision made for additional George Town Students; all schools open.



Ricardo Zapata Marti, “Focal Point on Disaster Evaluation,” of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), spoke to media this week on the aims of the five-member UN mission that arrived in the Cayman Islands on Monday (29 November). Essentially, the review aims to assess the impact of Hurricane Ivan on Cayman’s macro economic position. The ultimate goal is that the ECLAC report, to be completed by next Tuesday (30 November), will support government’s efforts at seeking aid for the Cayman Islands recovery from Ivan. Copies of other similar ECLAC reports can be found at [www3.cepal.org.mx/ricardo](http://www3.cepal.org.mx/ricardo).



## CUC Current

CUC is on target to complete the restoration of all re-connectable customers islandwide within the 90-day period projected after Hurricane Ivan.

There are approximately 1,700 customers still awaiting restoration and CUC expects to complete these reconnections by 1 December. The majority reside along the northern end of West Bay Road where reconnection began on Wednesday (24 Nov) and will be completed early next week.

With the rebuilding of lines nearly complete, CUC service crews will remain in the districts to continue reconnecting customers who become approved. These customers are asked to contact the utility's office at 949-4300 to schedule reconnection. For those who have completed repairs to their dwelling and need to schedule re-inspection, they are asked to contact the Planning Department at 916-5873.

The CUC crews will be concentrating on restoring streetlights around the island and has set mid-December as target completion date. A continued rebuilding of the infrastructure will also continue with work to enhance reliability of service, repairs to the submarine cable at Rum Point, and repairs to the North Sound Road plant.

# Child Psychologist offers Post-trauma Support

By Lynsay Brown

During a recent visit to Grand Cayman, Child Psychologist Dr Jerome Brodlie visited a number of schools and learning centres, spending time with students and discussing their hurricane experiences.

He also met with school counsellors, private and pre-school teachers, as well as parents, offering advice on how children behave in post-traumatic situations, and guidance on helping them.

Accompanied by Acting Chief Inspector of Schools Helena McVeigh and Deputy Permanent Secretary for Education Mary Rodrigues, Dr Brodlie visited Elmslie Learning Centre in George Town, North Side Primary School which is temporarily housed in the Craddock Ebanks Civic Centre, East End Primary School Learning Centre and the recently opened Bodden Town Primary School. Dr Brodlie spoke with students about how they were feeling after the storm, focusing on how their parents and houses had fared and whether they had any specific hurricane worries.

Many children said they didn't miss things like television but were worried that Ivan would return or saddened by pets they had lost. Dr Brodlie said: "With younger children especially, it is better to tell them honestly what happened to their pets. Kids are more resilient than we give them credit for."

He felt that some of the younger children were demonstrating regressive behaviour, such as sleeping in their parents' bed. "In some cases, this may result from increased anxiety or a change in home environment," Dr Brodlie said, "but as soon as the home is stable or back to pre-hurricane conditions, they should be encouraged to return to their own rooms."

Some students discussed how they were missing friends who were now at other schools

on the island or had gone overseas to study. Dr Brodlie explained that the absence of friends could often create a shift in alliance towards the family. However, if the family is emotionally fragile, as many are at this time, then this could create a problem for youngsters. "This is a time when teachers can play a much needed supportive role. School has an important function here as it allows a return to normality for children, especially if their home-life isn't back to normal yet."

Dr Brodlie advised that, two months after Ivan, it is now advisable to stay away from the topic of the hurricane, unless children still seem particularly affected or mention it themselves.

On the whole, Dr Brodlie felt that it was too early to offer a diagnosis on Post-traumatic Stress Disorder, as symptoms like sleeping disorders or flashbacks can take months to manifest. But, if a child is behaving differently to how he/she did before the hurricane, perhaps being withdrawn when they are normally outgoing, or showing signs of more disruptive behaviour, then it may be necessary to seek counselling.

However, Dr Brodlie said that children who were present during the storm will benefit from the experience; "It teaches them strength and vital coping skills, helping them deal with fears and develop resiliency in later life."

Dr Brodlie also recommended that adults slow down, saying, "Getting the country back into shape should be a marathon, not a sprint. There is a lot of guilt involved in not constantly undertaking recovery projects, but adults and children need comforting and relaxing times to recover from this experience."

An eminent child psychologist, Dr Jerome Brodlie is Professor Emeritus at Yale and Connecticut State University and has also been one of the correspondents on childhood issues for the CBS Network.

## Water Flows Eastward

The Water Authority is steadily moving towards the eastern districts, with efforts to restore service in High Rock beginning this week. Restoration of water service to customers in the area of Gun Bay should be complete in the next month.

Frank Sound to Half Moon Bay was re-

stored Monday, 22 November, having been completed ahead of schedule because of earlier than anticipated completion of area road works. Meanwhile, customers are still receiving water via tankers, and this will continue as long as necessary.

Continued restoration works will be un-

dertaken in close coordination with the National Roads Authority (NRA) due to the high level of road erosion in the eastern districts caused by Hurricane Ivan.

The Water Authority reassures all customers that staff is working diligently to restore service to all remaining customers and thanks everyone for continued patience and understanding during this difficult time.

# Psychologists: Parents Can Help Children Through Trauma

## Helping Children Through Trauma

The consequences of a traumatic experiences may be lingering and deep-seated and children are as susceptible to the after-effects as adults—and sometimes more so. Psychologists advise parents on how to identify and help their children through problems:

- Children may temporarily lose their view that the world is a safe and predictable place.
- Children may worry that the event may happen again, or that they or their family may die.
- Children may have difficulty understanding resulting damage, injuries, or deaths.
- Children may experience “secondary” trauma from accounts of others’ experiences
- Children may show varying responses: Some may recover quickly from the emotional impact of a disaster. Others may develop ongoing difficulties. Some may not show problems until months or years after the event occurred.
- Smells, objects, sounds, sensations, or activities associated with the trauma may trigger stress reactions, but the child may be unaware of the triggers or the behavioral changes that occur.

## Factors influencing children’s reactions

- Parents’ and adults’ reactions to the disaster and to children’s fears
- The level of death and destruction to which the child was exposed during and after the disaster, directly or through media, adults’ conversations, etc.
- Degree of continued disruption following the event
- Recent loss or previous traumas
- Early intervention
- Child’s age

## General guidelines for helping children cope

- Establish old routines.
- Accept children’s feelings and reactions as normal, and recognize that reactions may vary from child to child. For example, some children and teens may need to be more dependent for a period of time or may revert to earlier behaviors.

- Be selective in children’s access to media and other information sources.
- Talk about what happened.
- Listen to and accept children’s feelings.
- Give honest, simple, brief answers to their questions.
- Use age-appropriate language, and make sure they understand your answers and the meaning you intend.
- Use words or phrases that won’t confuse a child or make the world more frightening.
- Create opportunities for children to talk with each other about what happened and how they are feeling.
- Give your child an honest explanation if you are feeling so upset that you don’t want to talk about what happened. You may want to take “time out” and ask a trusted family friend to help.
- If children keep asking the same question over and over again, it is because they are trying to understand, trying to make sense out of the disruption and confusion in their lives.
- If a child feels guilty, ask him or her to explain what happened. Listen carefully to whether he or she attached a sense of responsibility to some part of the description. Explain the facts of the situation and emphasize that no one, least of all the child, could have prevented it.
- Even if you feel the world is an unsafe place, you can reassure the child by saying, “The event is over. Now we’ll do everything possible to stay safe, and together we can help get things back to normal.
- Notice when children have questions and want to talk.
- Be especially loving and supportive; children need you at this time.

If you have a child who is having trouble coping after Hurricane Ivan contact Dr. Antonia Hawkins, at the Cayman Islands Hospital, on 244-2650/244-2668.

## How Adults can improve Coping Skills

It is **common** for people who have experienced traumatic events to have strong emotional reactions.

- Understanding normal responses to these

abnormal events can help you cope effectively with your feelings, thoughts, and behaviors, and help you with recovery.

- Feelings may become intense and unpredictable (e.g., irritable, very happy, sad).
- Thought and behavior patterns may be affected (e.g., confusion, flashbacks).
- Recurring emotional reactions are common (e.g., anniversaries, triggers to upsetting memories).
- Interpersonal relationships may become strained (e.g., more conflicts, withdrawal).
- Physical symptoms may occur or pre-existing symptoms worsen, requiring medical attention.
- Individual reactions may vary: Some may respond immediately, but others have delayed reactions. Some may have lingering adverse effects, while others recover quickly. Some may show no effects at all.
- Reactions may also change over time.

Resilience is not a trait people either have or don’t have! It involves thoughts and actions that anyone can learn and develop!

Counsellors at the Cayman Islands Hospital, Department of Substance Abuse Services, and Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) are available to help.

For adults, contact Mental Health Outpatient Services, on 244-2650; Dr. Clement Von Kirchenheim, on 244-2726; Kathryn Dinspel-Powell, on 325-5245/325-5244; or the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP), on 949-9559.

## CaymanSpirit

A weekly publication of the Cayman Islands Government Information Services (GIS).

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GIS, Ministry of Tourism, Finance Portfolio  
Other sectors of Government

### Designers: GIS

**Printing:** CIG Computer Services

**Distribution:** Arranged by CIG Personnel  
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*Do you have essential public information or an inspirational recovery story to tell? Give us a call or send an email.*