

the Cayman Spirit



Cayman Islands Government Information Services

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Teachers *ITALIC*ise

The latest phase of training for ITALIC (Improving Teaching and Learning in the Cayman Islands) concludes this weekend (Saturday, 19 March). This follows two weeks of sessions that brought teachers and principals up-to-date on several curriculum software packages — *Destination Reading*, *Destination Math*, *Reading Upgrade/Comprehension Upgrade*, *Go Venture Small Business*, and *Personal Portable Library*.

Destination Reading will be used in all government primary schools and covers phonics, decoding and comprehension skills needed to guide students towards reading success. The latest training sessions introduced the benefits of the Learning Management System, which enables teachers to customize assignments and lesson plans for individuals or groups. "This allows for flexibility within the software programmes," explained ITALIC Programme Manager Ann Hale. "It means teachers can adapt the packages depending on the students' progress and different ability levels."

Destination Math focuses on applying learned skills and concepts to solve meaningful problems and will be used in all government schools.



IBM trainer Donna Commerford brings Bodden Town Primary School teachers up to speed with ITALIC.

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Oil Spill Clean-up Nears End



Manning the skimmer

In the last two weeks an additional 1700-2000 gallons of used oil that spilled into the canal near the George Town Landfill during Hurricane Ivan have been recovered by the Department of Environmental Health with help from Texas A & M University's National Spill Control School (NSCS) and local agencies. The operation was carried out without the use of chemicals and brings the total oil recovered to over 10,000 gallons.

A team from the school arrived on Grand Cayman on 3 March to assist with the actual clean-up phase of the oil spill located at the north-western end of the George Town Sanitary Landfill.

"Consultants from the NSCS have been invaluable in assisting the DEH in this phase of our recovery operation," said Chief Environmental Health Officer Roydell Carter.

During Hurricane Ivan, a five foot-plus surge swept through the landfill from the North Sound, dislodging drums containing used oil. The drums had been stored at the landfill's recycling area awaiting shipment to a recycling operation overseas.

Roy Coons and David Jensen of NSCS had previously visited the island on 1-4 February 2005 to carry out a preliminary assessment of the landfill cleanup operation at the request of the DEH and submitted a proposal with their recommendations for the remainder of the operation. On their recent visit, the two experts were accompanied by colleague Carl Christiansen who has over 25 years of experience in the field of oil spill cleanup and has conducted training exercises with the Department of Environment (DEH) in the past.

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Reading Upgrade/Comprehension Upgrade is a reading programme aimed at the middle- and high school-level students and will be implemented at those classes in government middle and high schools.

Go Venture Small Business is a realistic business simulation package that recreates the day-to-day experiences involved in starting and running a small business. It places students in the role of founders and CEOs of their own virtual businesses while engaging them in realistic situations and problems.

During a *Go Venture Small Business* training session at the Alternative Education Centre, teacher Mark Dolton's initial reaction was that the number of different components used in the simulations might overwhelm students. However, after using the product himself, he discovered that it was very flexible and students could start with simple factors, like pricing, and add complexity as they advance.

Teachers on the Brac were also introduced to *Personal Portable Library*. This software package contains an entire library, giving students and teachers portable access to the greatest works of literature, art, history, music, philosophy, science and mathematics.

ITALIC is a programme developed by the Ministry of Education, in partnership with IBM, and is designed to integrate the full use of computer technology in the education system to improve the traditional classroom experience.

Take Time for Yourself

By Cornelia Olivier

The Ministry for Health has declared *March Wellness Month* and asks all residents to put their health first by taking some time to relax.

Consider having a massage, taking a yoga class, visiting with friends or spending a day at the beach. The ministry wants all to know how important it is to spend time focusing on physical, emotional and spiritual well-being, especially during the post-Ivan recovery phase. "Promoting wellness is central to the ministry's mission statement, and although we called March a special month for reflecting on our personal physical and mental health, the ministry will be promoting wellness on a continual basis," said Deputy Permanent Secretary for Health Diane Montoya.

"As leader to all health industry partners, the ministry will use this month to pull together all agencies providing health services to secure optimal wellness of all our people. We want to build a well-regulated environment that delivers high quality, comprehensive health care and health promotion programmes," she explained.

To this end the ministry is working to develop a synergy with both government and nongovernmental organizations: "We recognize that government is only one source among many others where a person can access resources to meet their physical or mental needs. We therefore decided to facilitate and publicise all that is on offer in regards to

health care here in Cayman," said Mrs Montoya.

Wellness Month kicked off with a team from the Canadian Centre for Addiction and Mental Health offering skills training and awareness sessions for health care professionals from the public and private sector, including prison officers, health and mental health workers, teachers, counsellors and church representatives. The workshops included information on how to deal with traumatic stress and compassion fatigue.

Clinical psychologist and professor at the International College of the Cayman Islands (ICCI) Dr. Karen Dunbar designed and implemented the '**Neighbours Helping Neighbours**' programme. She is also currently working with the ministry to establish support groups within the community and within various organizations.

This public health initiative was launched in the Bodden Town district on 7 March with the Minister for Health, the Hon Gilbert McLean; the Minister for Education, the Hon Roy Bodden and MLA Mr Anthony Eden pledging their support to spread the message that while our people are busy rebuilding homes and businesses they must also take time to improve their quality of health.

To learn more about this and other wellness programmes, contact the Public Health Department at 244-2648 or schedule an appointment to speak directly with Dr. Dunbar by calling 244-2318.

Children and Family Services Returns to West Wind

The administrative offices of the Department of Children and Family Services, which manages the country's range of public services to ensure the welfare of all residents, are now back in the West Wind Building in George Town.

For assistance or enquiries about the various services, which range from child protection to assistance to the elderly, contact the DCFS Administrative Office, West Wind Building, telephone numbers 925 5345 / 925 5349 / 925 5350.

Honouring Women

This month is also Honouring Women Month, and the **Women's Resource Centre** (WRC) has planned a range of activities around the needs of women who often neglect their own personal needs to serve others. The Centre is encouraging women to take time for themselves, whether that means examining career options, relationships, or physical or spiritual well-being. The Centre's remaining March activities include:

- **Saturday, 19 March**, 10:00am, assertiveness for women and self defence workshops on Cayman Brac.
- **Tuesday, 22 March**, 5:45pm, seminar on

healthy eating and weight management; the importance of physical exercise activities and weight bearing exercise at the VIP lounge at the Truman Bodden Sports Complex.

- **Wednesday, 23 March**, 6:30 pm, reception for *Honouring Women Month* hosted by His Excellency the Governor Mr Bruce Dinwiddy, CMG and his wife Mrs Emma Dinwiddy.
- **Thursday, 24 March**, 5:30 pm, a workshop on developing a toolkit for proactive stress management at the WRC.

For more information on these and other planned activities, call the WRC at 949-0006.

Oil Spill Clean-up Nears End

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"After the consultants reviewed the work site on their first day here, the team commenced operations the next day, based on the work plan previously accepted by the DEH. On Friday the equipment was set-up and debris removed and by that afternoon free oil was being collected from the canal closest to the Esterly Tibbetts Highway and North Sound dyke road junction," said Mr. Carter.

Oil skimmed

DEH Laboratory Senior Research Officer Antoinette Johnson explained, "The team's approach was to wash the oil towards the earthen berm barriers that, along with oil spill booms, had been placed to contain the spilled oil and to prevent pollution. This allowed the free oil to pool in a layer thick enough to collect easily with skimmers. At the same time, the vegetation was washed and oil flushed from behind the rocks at the side of the canal."

The large amount of debris in the canal complicated the skimming process, so a DEH team removed the leaves and other detritus by hand to prevent clogging the skimmer. Oil and water collected was pumped into collection tanks and allowed to settle, at which point the water was drained back into the canal to repeat the cycle.

Oil soaked debris

Marl and mulch were laid to firm the dyke road surface and soak up oil to prevent further runoff into the canals. Oil-soaked debris that had trapped oil in pockets was also removed. The team preserved as much live vegetation as possible and rinsed the tree roots of accumulated oil removing any dead vegetation that was trapping the oil.

"This recent phase of the project resulted in an estimated 1700 – 2000 gallons of free oil being recovered from both sections of the canals. Monitoring of the site will be ongoing and any small remnants of oil that may accumulate will be removed. All of these procedures deliberately avoided the use of chemicals or other harsh methods in an attempt to minimize the damage to the surrounding mangroves," said Mr. Carter.

Ms Johnson said that monitoring of the site will continue in the medium to long term, with samples to be collected for analysis next week and in 3-4 months time. "By isolating

the contamination, removing the bulk of the spilled product and washing the vegetation, natural bio-remediation of any residue can now proceed," she said. NSCS estimates that within 4–6 months the majority of residual staining and clearing of residue of tree roots and canals should be completed. Therefore, there should be no permanent damage caused by this oil spill.

"Several agencies have given their assistance to this project including lending equipment and expertise. These include the DOE, MRCU, Petroleum Inspectorate, Water Authority and CIRO," Mr. Carter said. The Ministry of Planning, Communications, District Administration and Information Technology lauds the cooperative efforts of everyone involved: "It is testament not only to the local expertise and resources available in Cayman, but also to our long-standing relationships with overseas consultants who we are able to rely on in such situations."

Oil spill recovery

In just under two months the DEH team, assisted by the NSCS consultants and in collaboration with the DOE and the MRCU has:

- Contained the spill to landfill property, minimizing impact to the North Sound and surrounding mangroves.
- Removed, by mid-January, approximately 350 drums, either full or partially filled with used oil from the dyke roads and canals. Another 450 empty drums were collected and crushed for disposal.
- Pumped approximately 8,500 gallons of oil from those drums recovered which contained oil. Many of these drums contained a mixture of oil and water.
- Recovered an additional 1700 – 2000 gallons of free product from the waterways using the work plan.
- Removed oil-soaked debris from the canal and washed vegetation.
- Provided practical training to DEH personnel in oil spill response. Five DEH personnel received recertification in Hazardous Waste Operations and Emergency Response (HAZWOPER) as a result of working on this project.
- Started work on the improvements for the waste oil recycling programme to minimize the likelihood of a similar occurrence in the future.
- Improved the normal waste oil storage and handling area.

Hurricane Plan Revised

Continuing its efforts to assist Cayman in recovering from Hurricane Ivan, James Lee Witt and Associates (JLWA) has signed on to revamp the national hurricane plan in preparation for the 1 June start of the storm season.

Under the terms of the new contract between JLWA and government, the focus will be on revising and updating the hurricane plan. Currently, the revised plan is in draft form. JLWA will discuss the draft with senior civil servants on Friday (18 March). The revised plan should be complete by the beginning of hurricane season.

"The idea is to freshen up, revise if you will, the current plan based on the lessons learned after Ivan," said JLWA team member Dale Peterson. "The new plan will get everyone involved and hopefully clarify the roles of each emergency response person before, during and after an event. There were many things that changed the way people approached dealing with hurricanes after Ivan which will be incorporated into the reformatted and revised existing plan."

One new aspect will be the inclusion of a recovery plan. This will detail how the EOC transitions into recovery management after an event. It will also include debris management, temporary housing, and other areas which government has identified as urgent after a national disaster.

Overall, the revised Hurricane Plan will incorporate both existing and updated critical aspects of the immediate response to and initial recovery from such an event. The revised plan will also address existing policy issues. Training and table top exercises will be offered by JLWA. The training will include collaborative exercises that present scenarios designed to prepare executive leadership and first responders for the quickly approaching hurricane season. These exercises lead into a full exercise in May.

Each government department will be responsible for its own emergency plan which eventually should go beyond the scope solely of hurricanes. The plan should prepare the department for any internal emergencies and then expand to include disaster preparedness and recovery.

Both government and JLWA have identified the following areas as crucial to improving the way Cayman approaches and deals with natural disasters: shelter management, procedures for search and rescue, mass casualty management, expansion of the EOC to include an information centre, strengthening district response, and preparing for post event emergency housing.

The contract for the hurricane plan is set to be completed by the beginning of the 2005 hurricane season.

Debris Can Fuel Fires

This dry winter season has created an outdoor environment which is a potential fire trap for homeowners. Dry leaves and grasses, dead trees and discarded construction materials that have accumulated in yards since Ivan are all "fuel for fires."

The Cayman Islands Fire Service asks homeowners to be alert to the danger of brush fires and to take preventative steps to clean up and maintain their property. "Many people have been focused on repairing the inside of their homes and have neglected the dry debris accumulating in their yards," said Fire Officer Doorly McLaughlin. "Even homes still awaiting repair need to be checked to remove external fire hazards," he said.

Tips to Prevent Wild Fires near Your Home

Plants and Trees: Space trees out carefully when planting them. Prune tree limbs so the lowest is between 6'-10' from the ground and remove dead or overhanging branches.

Remove leaf clutter and dead vegetation from your roof and yard and mow regularly. Dispose of cuttings and debris promptly, according to local regulations.

Fuel for Fires: Remove "ladder fuels" – debris such as dry tree limbs that links grass and tree tops and would allow a fire to "climb" onto your home. Create a "fuel-break" – driveways, gravel

walkways or lawns around the home — so fire can't spread since it has no "fuel" to travel through.

Maintenance: Maintain your irrigation system regularly; refuel garden equipment carefully and maintain it regularly; store and use flammable liquids properly, and check pumps and hoses to be sure they are in good repair.

Storage: Don't store wood supplies near your house. Don't keep combustible materials under decks or elevated porches.

Fire-Resistant Materials: Make trellises of non-flammable material and when possible, use construction materials that are fire-resistant or non-combustible. Prevent sparks from entering house by covering vents with wire mesh no larger than 1/8".

Fire Exits: Have at least two ground-level doors as safety exits and keep at least two means of escape (either a door or a window) in each room.

Smokers and Fire: If you smoke, don't discard smoking substances in areas that contain dry vegetation.

The Fire Service advises property owners to observe regulations regarding vegetative clearances and fire safety equipment requirements. If you have any questions about fire regulations or need advice on how to prevent wild fires, call the service at 949-2276.

Lifeline Offered

The National Drug Council is endorsing a series of workshops called Lifeline Training to tie in with *Wellness Month*. Presented by Mr Kevin Pidwerbefki, the four-week course helps people to become more competent in their private and professional life by increasing not only their rational skills but the skills needed to draw on, and deal with, their own and others' emotional sides. For more information on these activities call 525-3846. The NDC can be reached at 949-9000.

Trailer Homes Bring Joy

By Cornelia Olivier

"People's responses to the trailer homes have been overwhelmingly positive. They are happy to have a roof over their heads and are settling in just fine," said Mrs. Twyla Vargas, administrative assistant for the Cayman Islands Recovery Operation's (CIRO) Temporary Housing Committee, after visiting several trailer homes across the island.

She does have one concern: "At present, we don't have enough trailers to house everyone in need; I hope that in time we will be able to accommodate everyone." To help meet that need, some 44 more trailers are expected to arrive within the next few weeks. Work is also progressing on leveling an area on the site of the Bodden Town Civic Centre to temporarily accommodate more trailer homes. So far 37 families in Bodden Town have applied for trailers. Of these, four families are living on the site off Gun Square and one family lives on a private site. The other applications are being processed.

As of the beginning of March, the housing committee has allocated 25 trailer homes, bumping up the number even further on Wednesday, 16 March, when 16 families received the keys to their new homes at a formal ceremony at the Fairbanks Trailer Village. It is not too late to apply for a trailer home. Those interested should visit CIRO's Housing Office in MacDonald Square on Fort Street where Mrs. Vargas will be on hand to help fill in the necessary forms.

The Port's Been Busy...

