



THE
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Mustard Seed home burns down in Kingston***

Prize funds Guyana Amerindian development

Ms Annette Arjoon, joint winner of the 2008 Public & Civic Contributions prize of the Anthony N Sabga Caribbean Awards for Excellence, has used her \$250,000 share of the funds to further develop the work being done by the Guyana Marine Turtle Conservation Society (GMTCS). Arjoon, the secretary of the GMTCS, has been the driving force behind their line of products, North West Organics, which will be part of the focus of the work.

Arjoon used her prize money as counterpart funds for an Inter-American Development Bank loan of US\$130,000. The project's focus is on marketing, product development and agro-tourism capacity building. The IDB loan was a boon, Arjoon indicated. "That only happened because of Dr Sabga's funds."

North West Organics is a line of products entirely made by Guyanese Amerindians from the north west of Guyana. Region One in north west Guyana is where the GMTCS does much of its work with turtle conservation. The area is set in the lush, compellingly beautiful Guyana interior. The products include cocoa sticks, crabwood oil, cassava bread, and cassava cassareep. In February, the line launched its newest items: chocolates and fudge.

One early success of the project has been to mechanise production by one of North West Organic's producers, the Blue Flame Women's Group, of Hosororo, Region One, Guyana. North West Organics is also looking to penetrate the Trinidad & Tobago market and is in talks with a major supermarket chain, HiLo Foodstores, to get the products on their shelves. This should happen by mid-year, she said.



Annette Arjoon, joint 2008 Public & Civic Contributions Award winner. Ms Arjoon, a former pilot, has returned to working with her family's airline at Ogle Airfield, Georgetown. Photo: Lisa Allen-Agostini

Arjoon, who is celebrating the first anniversary of her romantic relationship with Dave Martins, whom she calls a "Guyanese treasure," is back in health after suffering from over exertion last year. She is also enjoying "goodwill from government. President Barath Jagdeo has been very generous. Now we have five additional ladies in Starosa and Mabaruma providing us with cassava bread."

She has returned to helping run the airline her family owns, and is back in office at Ogle Airfield in Georgetown. "Ogle is about to become a municipal airport. There are a lot of developmental opportunities for us. It's exciting. I didn't realise how much I missed it. It complements my conservation work."

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Arjoon update

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Arjoon is looking forward to launching her personal charity, the North West Scholarship Fund, and hopes to select her first candidate by September, 2009. The scholarship will give one Amerindian girl US\$1,500 to attend university for a year. She is looking to fund four girls at a time eventually.

"I am looking at other ways of utilising my skills to fund raise," said Arjoon, who is herself part Amerindian. One of the ideas she is considering is using a documentary she produced, *Mabaruma Soujourn*, to raise money. However, she said she needs support to package it and sell it. "It was developed to promote tourism in the north west but why not to use it for the scholarship, too? Environmental agencies have committed to us to hire the trained girls," she added. "There's nothing we've asked for that we haven't got, touch wood."

Mustard Seed house burns down 30 HIV-positive children left homeless

Mustard Seed Communities, a Jamaican charity run by Anthony N Sabga Caribbean Awards for Excellence 2006 Public & Civic Contributions winner Fr Gregory Ramkissoon, lost one of its homes to fire on March 16. The blaze destroyed Martha's House in Kingston. It left 30 HIV-positive children homeless and one caregiver with a broken leg. Fr Gregory told the Jamaica Observer, "Everything is completely destroyed. We need clothes, shoes. I am making a public appeal for assistance. We need help." He is appealing for US\$150,000 to replace the home.

Fr Gregory said in an e-mail, "Please keep our children in your prayers as they go through this traumatic period."

To make a donation, go to:
www.mustardseed.com.

New Research Supervisor Appointed

Mr Nicholas Laughlin, a writer and editor from Trinidad & Tobago, has been appointed Research Supervisor of the Awards.

Laughlin is the editor of *The Caribbean Review of Books*, a quarterly devoted to Caribbean books and art. He was previously the editor of *Caribbean Beat*, the Caribbean Airlines inflight publication, a bi-monthly Caribbean current affairs, arts and culture magazine published by Media & Editorial Projects. *Photo courtesy Nicholas Laughlin.*



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