

THE NATIONAL COUNCIL ON AGEING

Volume 1, Issue 2



WORKING TO PLACE OLDER PERSONS' CONCERNS ON THE BELIZE NATIONAL AGENDA

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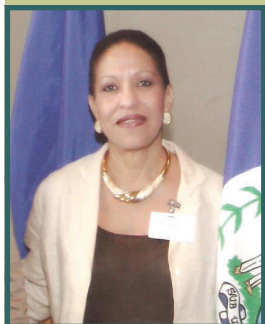
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TRIBUTE TO MS. KAMELA PALMA



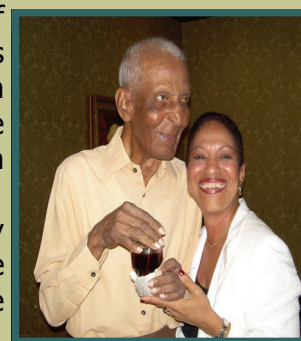
Ms. Kamela Palma

Ms. Kamela Palma has been the Chairperson of the National Council on Ageing since February 10th 2003 when, along with 16 member organizations, she was officially sworn into office at the Commissioning Ceremony, by Dolores Balderamos–Garcia, then Minister of Human Development, Women, Children and Civil Society.

Ms. Palma was chosen to be chair, not only because her previous experience and skills as a leader had been recognized but also for her passion and dedication to uphold the rights of older persons in Belize. On behalf of the Secretariat staff and past and present NCA members, I can say that she has been an excellent leader who has guided the organization through many stages of development to a point where we readily accept the challenges that will be presented to us when advocating for older people.

Although we will miss her at the NCA we are also very proud that she has been appointed Belize's Ambassador to the United Kingdom and that her skills as a diplomat have once again been recognized.

We congratulate her and do not need to wish her well in this new post because we all know that she will be an excellent Ambassador and representative of Belize.



Ms. Palma and her 97 year old father Mr. Carlton Fairweather

From the Editor

Welcome to the second issue of the National Council on Ageing's newsletter. I am the new Programme Officer for the NCA, having joined the Secretariat office in July this year and editor of this edition of the Newsletter.

It has been sometime since we have produced an updated newsletter but, as you can see, there has been many events taking place and no shortage of information to report on over the past few months. This edition has several articles featuring people who we wish to pay tribute to for their service and dedication. Chief among them being Ms.



Ix-Chel Poot

Kamela Palma who will be leaving us. She will be greatly missed and we wish her every success with her new appointment and of course we plan to always keep in touch.

Another person we pay tribute to is Mrs. Viola Myles who died at the age of 105 in March of this year.

Also featured in this issue are the nominees for the Golden Age Hero Award. The Golden Age Hero Award is designed to honor persons 60 years and older who, through voluntary service, have contributed to the improvement of their community. Nominations range from entrepreneurs to school teachers and everything in between. The NCA is proud to honor these older persons who have dedicated time and energy to selflessly serving our country.

The Golden Years

Belizean American donates bike to child infected with HIV/AIDS



The Golden Years programme continues to inform and educate Belizeans on the issues of older persons every other Sunday on Love Fm. The impact of the radio show was seen when after we aired a show on HIV/AIDS.

Ms. Sandra Peters a Belizean American who is an avid listener to "The Golden Years" on line, has responded to the call for help from the aunt of a 13 year old school girl who is HIV positive from birth. Sandra, while listening to the programme "HIV and AIDS and how it affects the Older Persons" has purchased a bicycle for the child that her aunt had requested during an interview in Dangriga. This has provided the child with a necessary means of transportation to school as she lives quite a distance away. The distance had made it difficult for her to travel to and from school especially in the afternoons. Sandra had wired one hundred dollars US to NCA's previous Programme Officer – Raphael Martinez. The bicycle was bought in Belize City and was picked up by Nurse Estella Humphreys - Health Educator and Chairperson of the HIV and AIDS Society in Dangriga on Saturday 5 April 2008. Nurse Humphreys has been working with the child and her family for the past 3 years. The NCA is grateful for the assistance rendered by Ms. Sandra Peters.

The Golden Years is broadcasted live every other Sunday with our hosts Mrs. Gwen Gillett and Ix-Chel Poot (NCA Programme Officer). If you would like to be a part of the Golden Years, you can contact us at 822-1546/822-3978 or call in during a broadcast at 203-2098.



The NCA Pays Tribute to Mrs. Viola Myles

In this issue of the newsletter the NCA would like to pay tribute to Mrs. Viola Myles who died in March 2008 at the age of 105 years. Mrs. Myles was not only a remarkable woman for having reached the age of 105 but also for the many years of service that she gave to the community in Belize City.



Ms. Viola Myles & Dr. Troja

Mrs. Myles was a lifelong Salvationist who came to Belize from her birth home of Jamaica when she was a young woman to work as a missionary with the Salvation Army in Belize. She never returned and spent the rest of her life in the home she came to love.

Sister Myles was known throughout Belize City and many citizens will have seen her each year around the months leading up to Christmas on Albert Street with a bell in one hand and a kettle in the other, collecting donations for the Salvation Army Xmas appeal for the poor and needy. In fact Mrs. Myles spent most of her time working with the poor and needy and was well known for her generosity.

Mrs. Myles was actively involved in other organizations apart from her church and supported the YWCA and HelpAge Belize. She entered and won the Miss Y Pageant at the age of 95 and was still dancing at her 100 year birthday party, as seen in the picture. The NCA will always remember Mrs. Viola Myles as a fine and spirited lady.



*Ms. Viola Myles
& Ms. Palma celebrate*

VOICE

The Representative Organization of Older Persons in Belize

The inception of VOICE saw the creation of a new type of organization working for older persons. VOICE is the medium through which older persons advocate for their rights and equal access to services. VOICE empowers older persons instead of serving them. VOICE members are advocates and through their advocacy they serve their country and other older persons.

It has taken the VOICE groups across the country some time to adapt to their new role as advocates. Some of the groups have needed restructuring while others simply needed a gentle push in the right direction.

Mr. Evan Dakers, the NCA consultant, has been working with the VOICE groups over the past months to ensure that the VOICE movement will not lose momentum and will continue making strides in



*Mr. Israel Alpuche,
VOICE Chairman*



VOICE two day workshop in Belmopan

the right direction

Recognizing that they needed to increase their management skills, a two-day training workshop was organized by Mr. Dakers and sponsored by United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the NCA. A total of 23 VOICE members participated in the workshop which focused on "Setting and Achieving Goals." The workshop was facilitated by Belize Institute of Management (BIM).

HEALTH CORNER

SUGAR-FREE BANANA CAKE

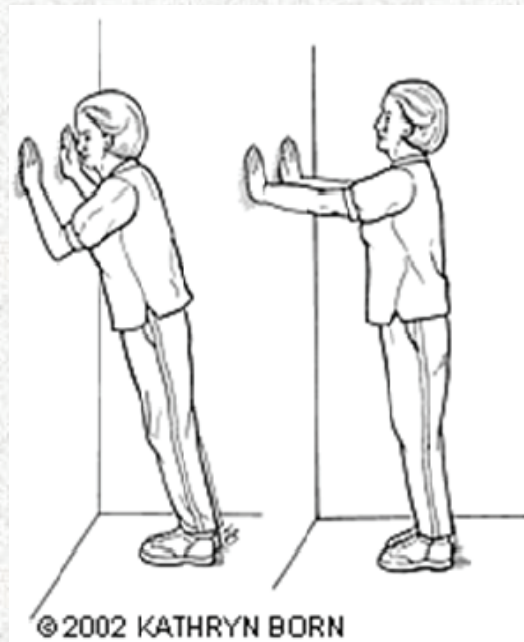
2/3 c. banana, mashed
1/2 c. butter, softened
3 lg. eggs
3/4 c. water
2 c. Whole wheat flour
2 tsp. baking powder
1 tsp. baking soda
1 tsp. cinnamon
Optional: 1 c. chopped walnuts OR 1/2 c. chopped walnuts & 1/2 c. raisins



Grease and flour a 9 x 13 inch pan. Beat together mashed banana and soft butter until creamy. Beat in water. In a separate bowl, beat eggs until very foamy. Beat into mixture. Blend in flour, baking powder, baking soda and cinnamon. Beat until smooth. Stir in walnuts or walnuts and raisins, if desired. Spread batter evenly in pan. Bake at 350 degrees for 20 minutes or until a knife inserted comes out clean. Cool. Serves 8-10

ENJOY!

WALL PUSH-UPS



1. Place hands flat against the wall.
2. Slowly lower body to the wall. Push body away from wall to return to starting position.

Golden Age Heroes



Mr. Antonio Vega Sr. and his wife Mrs. Lidia Vega

Mr. & Mrs. Antonio Vega have been married since April 26, 1943; their union has produced ten children and a life time of service to Belize. Mr. & Mrs. Vega were instrumental in the development of two key economic sectors on their island home of Caye Caulker; fishing and tourism.

Founder of the Northern Fisherman's Cooperative Mr. Vega's success was possible through the support and dedication of his family. His wife did the early book keeping of the cooperative and his children would aid in packaging lobster for export.

The introduction of tourism on the island saw the Vega's setting the standard for hospitality and water tours. When the need arose they donated prime real-estate for the development of an air strip.

Mr. & Mrs. Vega continue to impact lives through the volunteer work they continue to do on the island including sharing advice, home remedies and ensuring the cleanliness of the island.



Mrs. Elfrida Miguel, of San Antonio Village, Corozal, is 77 years old and has served her community for 53 years through voluntary service. She began working for her community after hurricane Janet and has not looked back. Her service includes work with Red Cross, the Corozal Methodist Church and the Methodist eye clinic.

Mrs. Miguel has been a leader in her community serving as a village councilor and as a Justice of the Peace.



Also Nominated:

Ms. Sadie Vernon- Belize City

Mrs. Edna Wiltshire- Belize City

Mrs. Ethel Castillo- Belize City

Mrs. Rose Groutsche, 69, migrated to Belize in 1967 with her husband Claude Groutsche. A proud mother of three Belizean born daughters, Ms. Rose began her volunteer work in 1969 when she joined Saint John's Ambulance Brigade.

She joined the Girl Guides Association in 1975 and worked with the guides on many different projects. This early work with young women has inspired much of her work with young people. Ms. Rose's life goal is to develop a facilities in which she can help teenage girls and school dropouts to become productive members of society.

Ms. Rose is a very active member of Belize Council for the Visually Impaired (BCVI) and even after her retirement in 2005 she still volunteers during the summer camps sponsored by BCVI.



Mrs. Arcadia Carrillo born on January 6, 1934, is a resident of Chan Pine Ridge, Orange Walk and has a long history of volunteer work in her community. Professionally she has served as a teacher, impacting and improving the lives of Belizean Children. Mrs. Carrillo continues to work as a teacher contributing to the development of her community.



Mrs. Gwen Gillett, is a very integral member of the NCA. Mrs. Gwen is the host of the Golden Years Radio show, a service she devotes herself to entirely. She is no stranger to the radio and in her early years she and George Mckeeseey were hosts of the very popular "Gwen and Georgie" radio show.

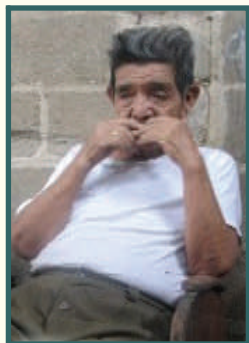
These days Mrs. Gwen devotes her time to her family and serving her community. She is presently the secretary for the Belize Council of Churches, a member of the board for the Sister Cecilia Home and the NCA.



Mrs. Gwen in action on the Golden Years

"Honoring older Belizeans doing extraordinary things in their community"

Golden Age Heroes



Mr. Julio Alvarado born March 29, 1922 immigrated to Belize in October 1954. He has lived through out the country of Belize but has settled in Benque Viejo.

As he settled into life in Benque Viejo Mr. Alvarado took on several community projects to improve the lives others. His work began in 1957 when he served as a founding member of the Benque Viejo credit union. In 1967 he was the vice-president of the first July Benque Fiesta a event that is held yearly and receives national support. A founding member of the Benque Lions club he has been responsible for two agriculture seminars and the organization of eye clinics.

Mr. Alvarado is well known for his talent as a harmonica player and is often invited to play the national anthem at events. His artistic talents also includes poetry and many of his poems have been published in national and international newspapers.



Mrs. Gwen Zetina can be considered a perpetual volunteer. She is present at many functions and participates in organizations where work needs to be done.

She is a lay preacher at Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic church and an active member of the Lions Club and HelpAge Belmopan. She loves her garden and her plants and for many years she has presented displays at the National Agricultural Show.



Mr. Ralton Brown, 77 has been described as very community minded. He is involved in his local neighborhood watch, which is his way of ensuring the safety of his community.

Mr. Brown is a member of VOICE Toledo where he advocates for the rights of older persons. He maintains a working relationship with local churches and the local Police Department



Godsman

Mr. Ellis has been involved in many organizations and campaigns and can be described as a committed activist and seeker of justice in Belize. Many will know him as an environmentalist and proponent of eco-tourism. He has served as the president of both Belize Tourism Industry Association (BTIA) and Belize Eco-Tourism Association; during his time with BTIA the Belize Marine Terminal was established.

His love for nature and its desire for preservation saw him take a strong stand against the building of the Chalillo Dam and the destruction of the wildlife habitat in the area.

Mr. Ellis is also an educator, agriculturalist and historian. He posses a vast wealth of knowledge of the Garifuna and Maya History. His love for his country and its people has caused him to be involved in the Human Rights Commission where he served as Vice-President.



Mr. Justo Castillo is a very active 88 year old member of the Belmopan community. He serves as a lay preacher at the Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church. A founding member of the Belmopan's Lions Club he still takes a very active role in events and fundraising.

Mr. Justo serves as a Justice of the Peace and is regularly called upon to swear in new citizens of Belize. He presently holds the post of Treasurer for HelpAge Belmopan and is a member of the Executive Board of the National Council on Ageing.



Also Nominated:

Mr. U. Pech- Hattievile
Nurse Gwendolyn Perez- Hattievile
Nurse Armandina Simmons, San Ignacio
Nurse Sanz, San Ignacio
Mrs. Alyndie Campbell- Belmopan
Mr. Rodolfo Lopez- Belmopan
Mrs. Rose Armstrong—Belize City

"Honoring older Belizeans doing extraordinary things in their community"



MEXICO—BELIZE HEALTH FAIR

In a joint effort to improve the lives of Belizeans the Belize and Mexico Governments hosted a Health Fair in Belmopan on 28 July 2008. The fair offered free health services including blood sugar testing and doctor consultations. The NCA was invited to participate through the erection of an educational display and booth.

Keeping inline with the theme of Health all our posters and displays were based on Healthy Ageing. We focused on three main areas: diet, exercise and mental health. In addition to the



Ix-Chel Poot (Programme Officer) and Ms. Jennifer Dunn (VOICE Member) providing information at the health fair

health display the NCA also provided pamphlets on Healthy Ageing including two Alzheimer's and mental health pamphlets designed by Christy Kessens, a student intern.

Our booth was strategically located at the entrance of the fair so people passing by on their way to other booths, had the opportunity to collect the information we were offering.

P.A.H.O. WORKSHOP **MENTAL HEALTH IN DISASTERS**

PAHO in collaboration with the Ministry of Health Organized a two day work shop to address the issue of Mental Health in Disasters. The workshop took place on the 31 July and 1 August, 2008 at the Radisson Fort George Hotel in Belize City.

The main objectives were:

- To review concepts of disasters management and understand the broader context of health in disasters and emergencies situations.
- To build a common understanding on mental health in disasters and emergencies in the country.

- To review the current approach to mental health disasters and emergencies in the country.
- To define a working process to update, improve and implement the mental health action plan in disaster and emergencies situations.

The workshop was facilitated by Monica Zaccarelli and Devora Kestel. Presentations were made by all the organizations which respond during a national emergency. The workshop closed with the creation of a draft National Mental Health Plan and the appointment of a committee to finalize and implement the draft.

ELDERLY AND DISASTERS WORKSHOP IN **THE BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS**

During the event of an emergency or disaster situation older persons often face increased difficulties because they may be slower to react both mentally and physically to impending danger. This will be compounded if they live alone and have no family to assist their evacuation from what they perceive as their fortress or comfort zone.

Many countries in the Caribbean region have felt the increasing impact of Hurricanes over the past few years so in an attempt to address the vulnerability of older persons in a disaster situation the Barbados office of PAHO organized a workshop in the British Virgin Islands on July 14th & 15th 2008, entitled



Ms. Jenny Dunn, Mary Lee Ellis, International Federation of the Red Cross and Mr. Jeff James, HelpAge International. This was particularly important for Belize since it had just suffered the effects of flooding from Arthur on June 2nd, right at the beginning of the season, which took everyone by surprise but especially those people that were affected in Stann Creek and the Gales Point / Mullins River areas.

The workshop was attended by Lindy Jeffery, Executive Director of the NCA and Jenny Dunn, a member of the VOICE organization from Belize. Topics covered during the 2-day workshop were:

- the impact of disasters on the elderly and

their subsequent care and rehabilitation

- the needs and challenges of providing appropriate responses during an emergency

Presentations were also made by participants having experienced disaster situations from Hurricane Ivan in Grenada and Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans.

It was agreed that all countries of the Caribbean need to up-date and improve their National hurricane plans to include procedures for the evacuation of older people in the event of any emergency situation.



Disaster and Elderly Workshop –BVI

Older People Celebrate Earth Day

Earth Day is celebrated internationally on April 22nd but this year Earth Day was celebrated a day early on April 21st at Guanacaste Park for older people from Belmopan and the children from Stella Maris School in Belize City.

The National Council on Ageing and Belize Audubon Society had been talking for some time about the need to make National Parks and protected areas more user friendly for older people and people with special needs, so to celebrate Earth Day, Guanacaste Park came alive with activities to stimulate the senses for all participants.

Over 100 people present enjoyed poems and dance from the children from Stella Maris and after a healthy lunch, Ms. Leela Vernon entertained everyone with a selection of her original songs. Old and young showed that they can both 'get down' when it comes to dancing to *brukdown*.

Other activities during the day involved the planting of Mahogany trees and trail walking for the energetic.

Hon. Peter Eden Martinez, Minister of Human Development and Social Transformation, set out from 4.00am to travel from Punta Gorda to Belmopan to attend this function and he was joined

"Treat the older person fairly and equitably"

by CEO, Ms. Judith Alpuche, Mr. Simeon Lopez, Mayor of Belmopan and Ms Kamela Palma, Chairperson of the NCA, who likewise had an early start to travel from Punta Gorda Town.

The Audubon Society staff gave each person tokens to remember the day – a mahogany tree, a green bag for shopping to avoid using plastic bags and a green water bottle. Everyone went home happy and the question frequently asked was "When will you be doing this again?"

See back page for photos

STUDENT INTERNS 2008

The NCA again this year was happy to accommodate a further 4 students during the months of June and July who were completing a variety of courses.

Andrea Town and **Catherine Poirier** from Queens University in Canada were in their final year of an Msc in Occupational Therapy and stayed for 5 weeks and worked on a project to deal with rehabilitation of homeless persons with mental health issues at Port Loyola Day Clinic.

Amanda Hansell from New Hampshire University, USA, also an Occupational Therapy Ba student undertook a quality of life study with the residents of the 3 homes for older persons in Belize.

Christy Kessens joined the NCA for just three weeks in July from ProBelize, a volunteer agency based in San Ignacio. Christy is currently studying Gerontology at Iowa State University and developed 2 very useful and interesting fact sheets on Dementia and Alzheimer's Disease. Christy also appeared as a guest on a Golden Years programme along with Mrs. Rose Armstrong from Sister Cecilia Home, to discuss the condition of Alzheimer's Disease and the various signs and symptoms of deteriorating mental capacity in older persons.

Both the leaflets produced by Christy are available from the National Council on Ageing office.



Mrs. Rose Armstrong from Sister Cecilia Home, Mrs. Gwen Gillett, Christy Kessens, the student intern.



Earth Day 2008 at the Guanacaste National Park in Belmopan

Look forward to the next issue of NCA's Newsletter in December 2008, articles will include:

- International Day of Older Persons
- Health issues
- NCA Planning Retreat
- NCA moves
- Intergenerational Projects



Where to find the NCA

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