

DAAS President's Annual Report 2011

The year 2011 saw the Dominica Academy of Arts and Sciences (DAAS) successfully confront a series of challenges as we sought to revitalize the DAAS mission and become more involved in bringing much needed support to the people of Dominica, and in particular the large proportion of the rural community that continues to live in poverty.

This effort was given a major boost towards the end of the year with the management acquisition of the Oceanographic Institute of Dominica (OID) LLC, based in Portsmouth, Dominica. OID is the leading producer of Tilapia and is in the process of expanding its range of aqua products to meet the growing demand for fresh fish on the island. The fish farm also provides the ideal platform for providing assistance to the rural communities.

OID will enter into a major collaboration with the Dominica Academy of Arts and Sciences (DAAS) aimed at bringing the expertise and passion for building international cooperation and world-class programs for tropical ecosystems and sustainable aquaculture research and education to Dominica. This process will be a collaborative effort which will bring together local and Diaspora Dominican scientists, Clemson University, The Smithsonian in Washington, DC, business persons, and local high schools and the Dominica State College students, farmers, and professionals, along with officials of the Government of Dominica. The ultimate objective would be to create a robust scientific research and development platform and culture which derive a Dominica based marine science and aqua-culture industry.

DAAS also continued to focus on working with local and foreign institutions to provide some solutions to our national problems and to address evolving needs in education, health, foreign relations and the productive sectors.

With this in mind, the DAAS awarded four scholarships to students of the Dominica State College in the general area of plant sciences. Awardees included Dwight de Gonzague (Agriculture), Eddiann Samuel, Dahrin Augustin, Nellie Jules (the latter three in Biology). The presentation of the awards was made by past DAAS President Dr Clayton Shillingford. The press was present and so were DSC Faculty members and DAAS members Raglan Riviere, webmaster, and Dr Thomson Fontaine.

On July 29, the Dominica State College (DSC) students Jeanne Royer and Dwight Degonzague from Agriculture & Biology completed the DAAS/De Filippis Summer Internships at the Smithsonian Institution National Museum of Natural History.

They were accompanied by instructor Mrs. Sharon Allicock-Joseph, Faculty of Applied Arts & Technology. For the thirteen students who applied for the Internship, the selection was based on evaluation of an essay "*The Value of the Smithsonian as an Institution of Learning*" as well as a wide ranging interview. The students and Mrs Joseph worked on two projects, one titled "*Digitization of West Indian Plant Specimen Records Contributing to Target One and Target Two of the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation*".

Focus was on entering data on locality information of the 5000 or so herbarium specimens that were collected from Dominica during the *Bredin- Archbold-Smithsonian Biological Survey of Dominica* in the 60's and digitization of the West Indies plant collection.

The work was guided principally by Dr Gary Krupnick, Plant Conservation Project Lead and Vinita Gowda..The group also had the opportunity of viewing other interesting biological displays at the Institution and other points of interest in the Washington area..including the Airspace and Art Museums, the White House and the War & Lincoln Memorials.

Dr Clayton Shillingford gave a lecture at the Dominica State College to Agriculture and Biology students within the Guest Lecture component of the Dominica Academy of Arts & Sciences (DAAS) MOU with the Dominica State College. The title of the lecture was "Discovery, Development and Proper Use of Agrichemicals", a topic of great interest as farmers attempt to balance the use of agrichemicals within an integrated pest management, organic and conventional farming processes to increase production of food, fiber, essential oils, floriculture and agro processing.

Under the DAAS umbrella a gift of children's clothing and educational toys valued at EC\$1500 was made to Zion Preparatory School by Dr Clayton Shillingford. A similar gift was made through DAAS local member Agnes Esprit to children in the Jimmit/Mahaut area. The gifts were kind donation from Dr Shillingford's daughter, Ms Gillian Shillingford-Palacios.

DAAS member, Ron Charles, attended a Library Fair at his local library in Canada where he obtained a number of brochures and pamphlets prepared by the local school district, and Fraser Valley Regional Library. These materials are used by area libraries and elementary schools to encourage reading and promote literacy. Ron requested and was given permission to use and reproduce these learning aids for educational and non-commercial purposes. Presentation was made to Ms. Juliana Paul on behalf of DAAS.

The recent storm Ophelia caused a significant amount of personal and property damage including loss of clothing. In the wake of that storm the daughter of Dr Clayton Shillingford , Gillian Shillingford- Palacios assembled mostly children's clothing and school supplies that were shipped in a barrel. Dr Shillingford passed these on to Fr Cuffy for distribution mostly in the Mahaut/Massacre area.

As we look forward to 2012 we do so with a deep sense of purpose and renewed commitment to the task at hand. DAAS will actively seek partners to help in providing funding and technical expertise to help us in realizing our goals in bringing meaningful change to Dominica.

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