

## **Chairman's Report 2021**

The 2020/2021 year has seen the continued impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Award's operations, both locally and internationally. Steady increases in reported cases have required the Award in Barbados to be cautious in the planning and execution of group activities, and traditional Adventurous Journeys have come to a virtual standstill due to enforced curfews and lockdowns. And yet, in spite of some attrition, we continue to see Participants persist and complete their Awards.

The Award is still viewed as an important milestone for its Participants, and despite the current challenges faced by all, it is even more important to invest in or young people; to help ensure they are #worldready and able to face the challenging times ahead.

According to the Online Record Book (ORB), there are over 450 registered persons in pursuit of an Award Level. With new partnerships, we were expecting this number to increase, but with the onset of the pandemic, we saw a significant drop in new registrations and activity. The flexibility and adaptable nature of the Award Framework meant that current Participants are able to continue doing their Award, identifying innovative ways to complete their sections, through online, virtual or even at-home activities. A special thank you goes out to those Participants who volunteered with the National Give Back Programme – including the packing of care packages distributed across the island - manning the Vaccination Call Centres, National Immunization Unit and other areas of national significance during the period.

The success of Participants is of course aided by the work of our Award Leaders and Volunteers. And so, the National Award Office continues to do what it can to make their jobs easier. Guidance from the International Award Foundation (IAF) about possible Award activities has been customized and made available for Award Leaders to share with Participants. Training opportunities related to upcoming projects have been well received, albeit limited in scope. And there has been a revision made to the Award web site, providing additional information that would be helpful at this time.

We also welcomed the introduction of new Award Units, and the development of Partnerships with The Deaf Heart Project, The Social Work Students Association at UWI Cave Hill, the Barbados Trailway Project, and the Barbados Probation Department. We are also looking forward to continued work with the Barbados YouthAdvance Corps in the new year.

A special congratulations to the Award team which took part in this year's Prince's Trust International Enterprise Challenge. The team came second overall, winning \$1,500 in investment funding towards their proposed social enterprise. We look forward to good things from the group.

One major Award achievement this year was the approval of the Culloden Farm lease agreement by the Parliament of Barbados. This has also been assented by Governor General of Barbados HE Dame Sandra Mason, who also happens to be our Patron. Over the past four years, this Chair has worked assiduously with the Ministry of Housing and Lands to get to this point. A draft of the formal lease agreement has been received by our attorneys. I have reviewed the agreement and

made some recommendations for changes, and this draft has been returned to the Ministry's attorneys for amendment. The ministry is moving swiftly at this point and I believe they are keen in having the lease executed in the very near future. I therefore expect a handover before Christmas. That would be a very nice Christmas present for the Award Programme. We have experienced much feedback in the public sphere around the plan for Culloden Farm, with minimum negative opinions I should add. I firmly believe that this investment will be great for the image of the Award and its ability to reach new Participants. It will provide a physical space for expansion of the programme to something that we have long yearned for.

Last year, we would have noted the successful funding of three projects through the Legacy Foundation, The Maria Holder Memorial Trust and The International Award Foundation Three Funds Grant, totaling just over \$183,000. This funding has so far been able to sponsor PPE and equipment for our projects with at-risk youth, sensitivity and counseling training for Award volunteers and staff, first aid training and equipment, and significantly, new equipment for use in Adventurous Journeys. These projects are expected to continue as we look to expand work with the Barbados YouthAdvance Corps and The Deaf Heart Project.

It would be remiss of me however, if I didn't acknowledge the work of Ms Carla Alleyne, who would have been instrumental in many of these achievements. Ms Alleyne demitted the office of Operations Manager effective May 31, 2021. She continues to work with the Award in a voluntary capacity, and we thank her for her continued service and wish her all the best in her future endeavours.

As we look forward to our 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2023, the coming year promises to be exciting, yet challenging. Additional requirements from the International Office will mean revised documentation and training requirements for Award volunteers. A revised Constitution is to be made available for review in short order. Our 3-year Strategic Plan will also be published shortly, highlighting a desire to work more with at-risk youth and persons with disabilities, as well as a transition from the Award's Six Pillars to the Three Strategic Aims – Access, Reach, and Impact. We also look forward to completing our International License Review in March 2022. This will require input from all parties within the Award if we are to be successful. Finally, the Expedition Panel looks forward to the potential hosting of CASC 2023 as part of the anniversary celebrations.

I would like to acknowledge the work of the National Award Office, our Award Units and Volunteers, our trustees, donors and our supporters for ensuring that our young people continue to be involved, and ensuring they are ready for the changing world.

Stephen Smith  
Chairman – National Award Council  
The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award Barbados  
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