

SV2G WYCOMBE STEEL ORCHESTRA

After Brooklyn - New York, High Wycombe has the largest Vincentian community in the world outside St. Vincent itself. The other major minority ethnic group settled in the town has its origins in Mirpur (AK) Pakistan. The county of Buckinghamshire has the largest concentration of Vincentians in the UK. The relationship between the District Council and St. Vincent and the Grenadines is well documented and several exchanges have taken place as gestures of goodwill.

SV2G are very aware that young Caribbean students in British schools have little or no exposure to their heritage, as there are no tangible resources in schools to equip these students to develop and increase their self-esteem through an exploration of their identity, and their uniqueness. This has led to many Caribbean students under achieving in British schools. Government research into this problem has highlighted the need for more cultural awareness within school settings to enable all pupils to have a greater

SV2g



respect and tolerance of others and it is very important that the teachers and the community as a whole gain an insight into the Caribbean culture.

We have built a sound relationship with local schools and youth clubs in the area and have linked schools in St. Vincent & the Grenadines with schools in High Wycombe, forging a relationship to promote the Windward Islands, enhancing the Vincentian heritage and culture. Our schools partner, WIBDECO, funded presentations in UK schools on the banana industry in the Windward Islands that is on the brink, owing to increased competition in the market. The new yearning of Caribbean people based

in the UK to identify with and understand their "roots", and the emphasis within the school system on food is of great interest to us. As a result, we have included an educational project in the organisation consisting of many programmes. One of which was where we visited schools with a heritage and cultural exhibition, together with a selection of historical and contemporary collections relating to everyday life in the Caribbean. SV2G has also had an educational tour from St. Vincent & the Grenadines Education Ministry during the month of March 2006. The successful visit to youth clubs, community groups and schools saw the Vincentian entourage treated to cultural poetry, music, dance, and workshops.

SV2G wants to encourage good citizenship and sustain a sense of belonging, pride and self-worth among community members by providing an awareness of Caribbean culture and filling the gap of knowledge within our community. The steel pan project we are currently running involves the young people learning a wide repertoire that was used to showcase their talent during a community festival in September 2006 and Black History Month in October. This promoted a positive image and social interaction within our diverse community. The steel pans are used as an instrument for playing and as a tool for workshops on its history. The vision was for the group to teach parents and grandparents to play the steel pans over the summer to enable a performance of three generations of players to perform at the UK celebration of Black History Month.

SV2G currently have 26 players and a large waiting list! They are planning to take a dozen off the waiting list to start a beginner group that is financed by Lottery funding. Further funding will see another steel pan project in 2007 including the purchase of computers and software to enable their young tutors to compose their own arrangements. SV2G will be starting a research project in 2007 on the development of steel pans in contemporary society and introducing a grading system into their Organisation.

By Jacqueline Roberts

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