

Fatima Old Boys Association – President’s Report for 2012-2013

Good afternoon to all. It gives me great pleasure to see old and new faces in this AGM. I believe it augurs well for the future of both FOBA and Fatima College as the success of our organisation is predominantly dependent on your involvement and participation.

The last year has seen quite a few changes and accomplishments in FOBA and I will summarise and recap them.

School Support

Every year FOBA undertakes a capital project as part of our contribution to the school. In past years these projects included but were not limited to refurbishment of the library and construction of the mezzanine floor in the Hall. This year we actually undertook two capital projects: refurbishment of the playing field pavilion and implementation of wi-fi in the school compound.

The Pavilion Project

The pavilion was built several decades ago and, as we all know, was in dire need of repair. The electrical system needed overhauling, the lights were broadly inoperable and the toilets, in fact the facilities at large, were generally in a sorry state.

We decided to repair the pavilion and upon doing so, we thought it made sense to upgrade it to a first class facility. The improvements include:

- A well-equipped and air-conditioned gym with free weights, cardio equipment and massage tables
- Refurbished home and visitors’ dressing rooms in Fatima colours that are now air-conditioned
- A room for officials

- An enhanced and re-organised equipment room with additional cages and cupboard space for all sports
- A female toilet
- Flood lighting surrounding the structure
- A state of the art CCTV security camera system

The repair work included the complete rewiring of the facility as the electrical system was the same one installed when the pavilion was built. It was therefore over fifty (50) years old. Additionally, lighting, painting of all walls and surfaces as well as weather sealing of the seating area upstairs to prevent leaks affecting the downstairs area which houses the dressing rooms and gym were all undertaken.

In addition to work on the Pavilion, we decided to upgrade other aspects of the playing field's facilities. This included, but is not limited to, reverting to the traditional design of three football pitches, building goal posts for all said pitches, and designing one of the football pitches to double as a rugby pitch to bring the dominating Fatima rugby team back to Fatima grounds for home games. Repairs were also made to the heavy, medium and light rollers used during the football and cricket seasons. All this work, though initially estimated to cost in excess of \$250k, eventually actually cost the Old Boys approximately \$90k. This was due to us pursuing discounts and sponsorships from suppliers and free services from Old Boys particularly in the areas of electrical, security and air-conditioning.

Other work remains to be done on the field. In particular, the cricket nets need to be re-done and the basketball and tennis courts also need refurbishing. I therefore appeal to any of you present today

who may be able to assist in these areas to please feel free to identify yourselves to Ariston or any member of the committee.

Implementation of Wi-Fi

The other capital project done this past year was the installation of the school Wifi network capable of having 400 users on it simultaneously. FOBA in fact took over this project at the start of the summer period as the previous project sponsor (Class of '86) diverted their attention to another necessary project within the school namely the acquisition of desktops and servers for the computer lab. While we had not planned for this project, we were still able to quickly pull together the necessary resources to get it completed. To date, the students of Forms 1, 2, and 3 enjoy wifi access. In order to keep pace with the government's laptop program we will have to do an additional form each year for the next three years starting with form 4. Due to the network's design however, parts of the Form 5 and Form 6 blocks receive coverage at present. We anticipate finishing this project over the next couple years. So that was last year

This year we will be undertaking our largest ever project: the building of an additional wing in the school. This wing will be located in the north-west corner of the school compound. It will be in the spot currently occupied by the TD, Art rooms and the basketball court.

This wing is much needed as the school is very short on classroom space for both the students doing specialty subjects as well as those in Form 6. Additionally, as it stands right now there is no capacity to expand the curriculum to include a more diverse offering which seeks to keep pace with the changing requirements of our school population. It is hoped that this additional space will allow for us to continue being trendsetters and beacons within the education environment.

You will see that demolition work has already been completed. We fully anticipate finishing the building by the start of the school year in September. Our assumption is based on us having the necessary financial capability to support the contractor's requests in the timeline that he requires. The cost of putting up such a structure is not insignificant. At \$3.7M, this commitment is outside of FOBA's banked resources and natural capabilities. As a consequence we have engaged and are still engaging every stakeholder, friend, past pupil and/or well-wisher to contribute to our fundraising efforts. I therefore officially engage all of you here today. We need your help!

In addition to capital projects, FOBA provides significant assistance in the sporting arena. As in the past, football and cricket receive the lion's share of our contributions. However, rugby, water polo, swimming, track and field, scrabble, chess and hockey also receive attention. Additionally we have decided to assist more overtly our very successful choir and musical ensemble. All these items aforementioned require lots of money.

As you would already be aware, the two major fundraising activities are the Carnival Fete and the Cookout. However, we do try having other events and pursuing other avenues of revenue. Some of those ideas will be shared later.

Carnival Fete

Every year our Carnival Fete is proclaimed by many to be the best fete and with good reason – it is the best fete in Trinidad and Tobago. Period! This year in addition to the thousands of fetes congratulating us on producing a quality event, the reputable website TriniJungleJuice gave us their highest rating ever for any fete in Trinidad and Tobago. Fatima fete score was 97 percent up from 77 percent last year where we were still in first place. This is proof positive that we provide the best ambience and enjoyment of any fete anywhere.

To put on such a successful event requires a tremendous amount of work and planning. Every year we review to maximise the successful aspects of the fete and we also try to innovate to give our patrons something new to look forward to. In particular, this year we expanded the layout to include a portion of Francis Lau St. and the grounds of the Woodbrook Presbyterian Church. These areas became a food emporium and housed an additional bar, thus creating more room in the main compound for patrons. By all accounts, this was a tremendous success and, assuming the Presbyterian Church continues to support our objectives, this is now a permanent feature of our fete moving forward.

This year we placed a greater emphasis on the profitability of the fete and on getting better value from our suppliers and sponsors. To a great extent this worked very well and is reflected in the record profits of the Fete. The fete committee was given by me what at the time seemed to be an impossible target of 1.5m profit, bearing in mind that we had made just over 1.1 million last year. To ask a team of volunteers to increase their profits by close to 30 percent was aggressive. I am, however, pleased to announce that we made our target with the fete yielding \$1.475m in profit; an increase on the \$1.115m made in 2012.

Carnival Cruise

In an effort to buffer the fete profits and diversify away from having just two major annual fund-raising events, this year we introduced a Carnival Cruise. This event was distinctly aimed at our younger Old Boys and those who may not have been in a position to afford the all inclusive. It was the first event put on by the Events sub-committee and was held on the Wednesday after the Carnival Fete on the Harbour Master. Considering that it was a first time event in a busy time period, it was very successful – both financially and from an enjoyment perspective. I am positive that this

event will quickly grow into a staple on our Carnival Calendar. The cruise, though in its first year, was able to stand on its own two feet and yield a profit of approximately \$35k.

Cookout

Our annual Salt & Pepper cookout was held in October. This event is geared towards bringing Fatima alumni and their families together in a relaxed social atmosphere while raising funds for the school, and in this regard it was very successful. Additionally this year we set ourselves a very aggressive profit target for this event and we made our target. We asked the committee headed by Mitch to achieve a profit of \$150k . The Committee did it, in fact they surpassed it, increasing the profit by approximately 70 percent against last year's figure. In 2011 the profit for the cookout was \$92,190 as opposed to 2012 where the profit was \$166,764, an increase of approximately 80 percent. Congrats to Mitch and his team.

Wall Signs

Hosting events is only one way in which we raise funds. Renting out space on the walls and billboards on the field is another. This area is a useful source of funds for us and we continue to try to maximise its potential through the efforts of Kenny Young and Kent Jeary and the Sponsorship sub-committee.

Organisational Changes

FOBA underwent some significant changes over the last year. We started several initiatives (e.g. Carnival Cruise) and had different attitudes (e.g. profitability of the Fete) but they all can be linked back to some fundamental changes in our constitution.

In the recent past we have had only one actively functioning sub-committee: the Alumni sub-committee. Previously the head was appointed by the management committee but this year we decided on a different tactic which was brought to the membership and ratified in our Extraordinary

General Meeting (EGM). We have formalised four sub-committees by making the chairs of those sub-committees elected roles. The first election for these roles was held at our Extraordinary General Meeting. The formalisation of those roles is a direct result of concerns raised during and feedback from last year's AGM where members lamented the inability of very motivated members to contribute on a high level. I listened very attentively to that sentiment and in fact agreed with a lot of what was said. Consequently, I lobbied within my own caucus to have this and other changes made to encourage wider past pupil participation. It was felt at that time that there weren't enough elected positions available, so the addition of these four sub-committee chair positions has created an avenue for persons to directly contribute to FOBA. Additionally these sub-committee chairs are responsible for and have the latitude to recruit any Fatima past student from any era anywhere to sit on their committees up to a maximum of nine members. So far this idea has worked very well.

The Alumni sub-committee does a sterling job communicating with the membership on a variety of fronts. The Events sub-committee has already hosted one financially successful event in the Boat Cruise which contributed some \$35k towards the carnival fete bottom line. This committee has plans for several more events this year. The Sponsorship sub-committee also played a significant role in increasing the Fete's profitability by streamlining our sponsorship packages and maximising the value of associating with brand Fatima and /or brand FOBA. This committee continues to explore ways to maximise our assets and increase our cash flow. Our final sub committee is dormant and we hope to give it its jumpstart here today. This committee is the Recognition and Benefits sub-committee. This sub-committee will be responsible for designing packages that benefit the Old Boys Community and for developing a recognition programme for Old Boys to include the Fatima College Hall of Fame. Each of the chairs of the active sub-committees will report on their progress a bit later on.

The other significant organizational change was the hiring of an Operations Manager. The genesis of this role was the realisation that funds were being spent in the school (particularly in sports) and FOBA Management did not have the time and presence to ensure that we got proper value for it. Consequently we took on Mr Ariston Sutherland to become FOBA's man on the ground. Working alongside our stalwart Karen, Ariston has managed to transform FOBA into a very professional entity which now has real time representation that is consistent with an organization the size of FOBA. Since Ariston's arrival, his role has expanded tremendously to include all aspects of FOBA operations. He has effectively become Mr FOBA.

Appreciation

FOBA has been around for almost 5 decades now and we have grown by leaps and bounds since then – particularly in the last 10 years or so. Each year we try to grow and increase our capabilities to lend more support to Fatima. However, the more we accomplish the more we realise there is to do.

It would be remiss of me to show appreciation for all those who helped us in the last year without first recognising the efforts of long standing FOBA members throughout the years. People like our first president Derek Johnson, Ian Benjamin, Dennis Ramdeen and others too numerous to name. There are several long standing members on the management committee who provide, among other things, guidance and context to many of our discussions and ideas. Roger d'Abadie, Barry Davis, Stafford Yorke, Kenny Young and Newman George – I thank you.

The Executive Committee has played a major role in the last year. Ruthven - the Vice President, Graeme - the Secretary, Mitch – our Treasurer, Hayden – the Assistant Secretary and Laurence – the Assistant Treasurer: together we form a well-balanced and formidable team. I greatly appreciate what you gentlemen bring to the table. Your insights and efforts are indispensable. However, other

members of the management committee also contributed in no small measure throughout the year. Without your efforts we would not be what we are today. So thank you to Derek, Trevor, Kevin, Raymond, Kenny, Noel and Keith.

I would also like to single out the gentlemen who stepped forth when we created the sub-committees. There was (and is) a lot of work to be done as you were all starting from scratch. Moving forward each of you will be adding a lot of value to FOBA. My gratitude goes out to Kent, Raymond and Clint. Please also pass on my sentiments to your sub-committee members, as I'm sure they do their bits too.

The Extended FOBA Family

In running the Association and putting on events we inevitably depend on the efforts of individuals outside of the organisation. In particular I would like to thank:

- The extended Fete Committee who help organise and run the Carvival events. It would not be what it is without you.
- The cooks at the Cookout who come out in their numbers to provide and serve dishes.
- The companies and individuals who donate and provide sponsorship.
- The Parent Support Group who help not just FOBA but Fatima – thus making our job easier.
- Karen, our Admin Assistant, who works tirelessly and adds great value to every single aspect of all that we do.
- And Fr. Gregory – without whose encouragement, support and consent all of our efforts would fall flat.

If I have missed anyone I apologise. To all those named and un-named, I extend my deepest gratitude.

Conclusion

This last year has seen a lot of change in FOBA - a lot of good change. In the coming years we will be increasing our capacity to aid the school and also engage the membership at large. It won't be easy to achieve but I'm sure that with the dedication and support of members like you we will get there.

Nintendo Vinces!