

Fatima Old Boys Association – President’s Report for 2013-2014

Good afternoon to all. As always, I am pleased to see the mix of old and new faces in this AGM. It is an indication of the strength of FOBA, one which similar organisations cannot match. In more ways than one, Fatima is second to none.

The last year has been dominated by one project: the construction of the New Wing. While most of our activities have revolved around supporting this project that does not mean that everything else was neglected. The Management Committee has continued its various fundraising activities and support for the school. Additionally, each of the sub-committees has made their contributions as per their remit. Reports on these activities will be delivered later by their respective chairmen.

School Support

Each year FOBA chooses a capital project as a way of making infrastructural improvements that would otherwise go undone. Previous years have seen projects like the library refurbishment and the implementation of wi-fi in the school. This year we undertook the granddaddy of them all: the construction of a New Wing!

The New Wing

At last year’s AGM, I had noted that demolition work had begun on the site of the New Wing. In order to construct, we had to remove the building that housed the TD and Geography rooms. The allotted timeframe for the project was 3.5 months – to describe this as challenging is an understatement. However, due to the diligent work of project engineer Mark Jeremie, a Fatima Old Boy, we were not only able to have the building ready for the opening of school, but it was also done under budget!

While the building has been completed, the fundraising activities surrounding it continue. During its construction we received several discounts and preferential payment terms from suppliers. We also received several donations from Fatima alumni, but this amounted to a few drops in the bucket of debt. The vast majority of the cash outlay was borne by FOBA and it is highly likely that we will be paying off our debt for another year.

Cricket Nets

How many of you have had a look at the state of Fatima’s cricket nets over the last year to 5 years? They were in a deplorable condition with only one of the three lanes being available for use due to cracked concrete pitches. Additionally, the chain link fence was so mangled that it presented a health and safety hazard for our boys. Cricket balls’ lifespans were also significantly reduced, thus increasing our equipment spend.

Thus, after consultation with our cricket coach, Miguel Paty, we came up with a design for the new nets. To begin, the concrete pitches would all be re-laid. Also, we moved away from the use of chain-link fencing and implemented soft netting that cushions the impact of the ball. For those of you who frequent the Queen’s Park Oval, the system we have implemented is similar to theirs. The key difference between them is that our system allows for the easy retraction of the nets between practices.

The nets were recently completed (with the help of Mark Jeremie, once again). The cost of the project was approximately \$125,000 and this included outdoor artificial matting in one of the lanes. We expect the new cricket nets to last at least 20 years.

Standardised Fatima Sports Uniform

Over the years we have seen several different uniform designs used to represent Fatima in sports. This wouldn't be so problematic if a few other teams (for example El Dorado Secondary and the Defence Force) didn't also use our combination of yellow and blue. To this end we decided to standardise the uniform so that no matter where Fatima was playing, we would be instantly recognisable as Fatima. We chose to go with a custom design that would make it difficult for other teams to replicate.

There was a competition within the school to submit designs. We also invited Fatima alumni to submit designs and be part of the process. In the end, we chose to go with a design by Jason Aguiton. I am quite pleased with the result, as I'm sure you are too. We are currently in the process of having sourcing suppliers so that we can have them in time for the start of the school year in September.

Fund-raising Activities

In order to accomplish all that we do FOBA needs to engage in significant fundraising, the majority of which comes in the form of events. The events that we hosted this past year you should all be familiar with: the Annual Fete, the Cookout, the Carnival Cruise and the Gospel Concert.

Carnival Fete

Every year our Carnival Fete is considered by many people to be the number one fete during Carnival. In fact, it is so consistently good that we no longer compete with other all-inclusives – we compete against ourselves. This creates a conundrum for us as each year our faithful patrons expect more than the previous year. It is a testament to the tremendous amount of hard work and planning that goes into it that year after year we keep them begging for more! This year we managed to secure the service of Machel Montano for the first time. By all accounts, Machel's performance went down quite well with the crowd – to say the least! Our challenge moving forward is to ensure that Machel performs in every fete.

Cookout

As usual the Salt & Pepper cookout was held in October. This event presents the Fatima family with an opportunity to socialise and mingle in a relaxed atmosphere while enjoying some good food. To this end, we were successful while also raising some funds.

Carnival Cruise

2014 saw the second edition of our now annual Carnival Cruise. The location and time were the same as last year: namely the Wednesday after the Fete and on the Harbour Master. This year, though, saw a new twist – the partnering with other alumni associations to widen our target market. This partnership with Bishops and St. Francois was largely successful and we look forward to further collaborations with them. We also introduced having food – doubles – on the cruise. This went down quite well with patrons as cooler cruises don't normally provide food.

Gospel Concert

As part of our immediate fundraising efforts for the New Wing, we decided to host a gospel-themed concert featuring the award winning Fatima choir. This concert was hosted over 3 days at the Central Bank Auditorium. The event was a success as attendees were impressed and looking forward to the next edition. We will likely host the next one in a year's time.

Wall Signs & Sponsorship

Hosting events is not the only avenue for fund-raising that we employ: we also rent out space on billboards and walls around the field. Through the work of the Sponsorship sub-committee, we have engaged in several multi-year deals that will see greater usage of the wall space and also construction of additional billboards. More details on this will be provided by Kent Jeary in his report.

Appreciation

FOBA, while not the oldest alumni association in Trinidad, is definitely one of the strongest. It certainly did not get so by chance. Over the previous 5 decades yeoman service was provided by several stalwart members long before it became somewhat 'fashionable' to be involved with the Old Boys. People like Derek Johnson (our first President), Dennis Ramdeen, Ian Benjamin and several others too numerous to name are no longer involved at the management level but never fail to lift a finger when asked. Our gratitude to you is boundless.

The past couple of years have seen other long serving members like Roger d'Abadie, Stafford Yorke, Kenny Young and Derek de Gannes ride off into the sunset ...so to speak. They, however, still remain quite involved in operations of FOBA. Gentlemen, thank you.

The Executive Committee consisting of Ruthven - the Vice President, Graeme - the Secretary, Mitch – our Treasurer, Hayden – the Assistant Secretary and Laurence – the Assistant Treasurer perform well as a team and each bring something unique to the table. I cannot imagine where I'd be without them. Gentlemen, thank you.

The other members of the management committee contributed significantly to another successful year for FOBA. Newman, Trevor, Kevin, Raymond, Kenny, Noel, Keith, Rawle and Rene – the sum total of your efforts is greater than the individual contributions. Gentlemen, thank you.

I'd like to single out the sub-committee chairmen who frequently do the double duty of running their sub-committees and also contributing at the management level. Colin, Kent, Jason and Clint – your current work augurs well for the future of the organisation. Gentlemen, thank you.

The Extended FOBA Family

FOBA receives significant support from those outside of the organisation. At the very least, they make our job much easier and enable us to accomplish so much more. In particular I would like to thank:

- The extended Fete Committee who help organise and run the event. 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 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 past year has been one of significance for FOBA. We attempted a lot and achieved a lot as well. But the work doesn't stop here. There is a lot more to do and we will get there – with the support and dedication of members like you.

Nitendo Vinces!