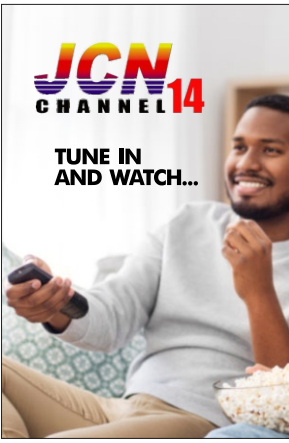




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FOCUS ON MEN AND BOYS

—MENTAL WELLNESS A PRIORITY AS SUICIDE NUMBERS CLIMB

BY MAKEIRA TUCKER
Journal Staff Writer

So far this year, four people have died by suicide in The Bahamas and 37 people have tried to take their own lives. It highlights the seriousness of the matter as the numbers continue to climb.

Minister of State for the Ministry of Health and Wellness, Owens Wells speaking at a symposium yesterday hosted by the Public Hospitals Authority and Sandilands Rehabilitation Centre to mark World Suicide Prevention Day said in 2025 The Bahamas recorded 16 deaths to suicide and 62 attempted suicides.

Men and boys are particularly vulnerable which is why the focus of the symposium was “changing the narrative on suicide...changing the narrative in men and boys, breaking the silence, building hope.”

Wells referred to a Bahamas 2025 Global School base student health survey revealed that amongst boys 15.6% have seriously considered suicide, 16.2% have made a suicide plan and 14.17% reported attempting suicide. “Ladies and gentlemen that is roughly 1 in 7 boys surveyed reported a suicide attempt,” said Wells.

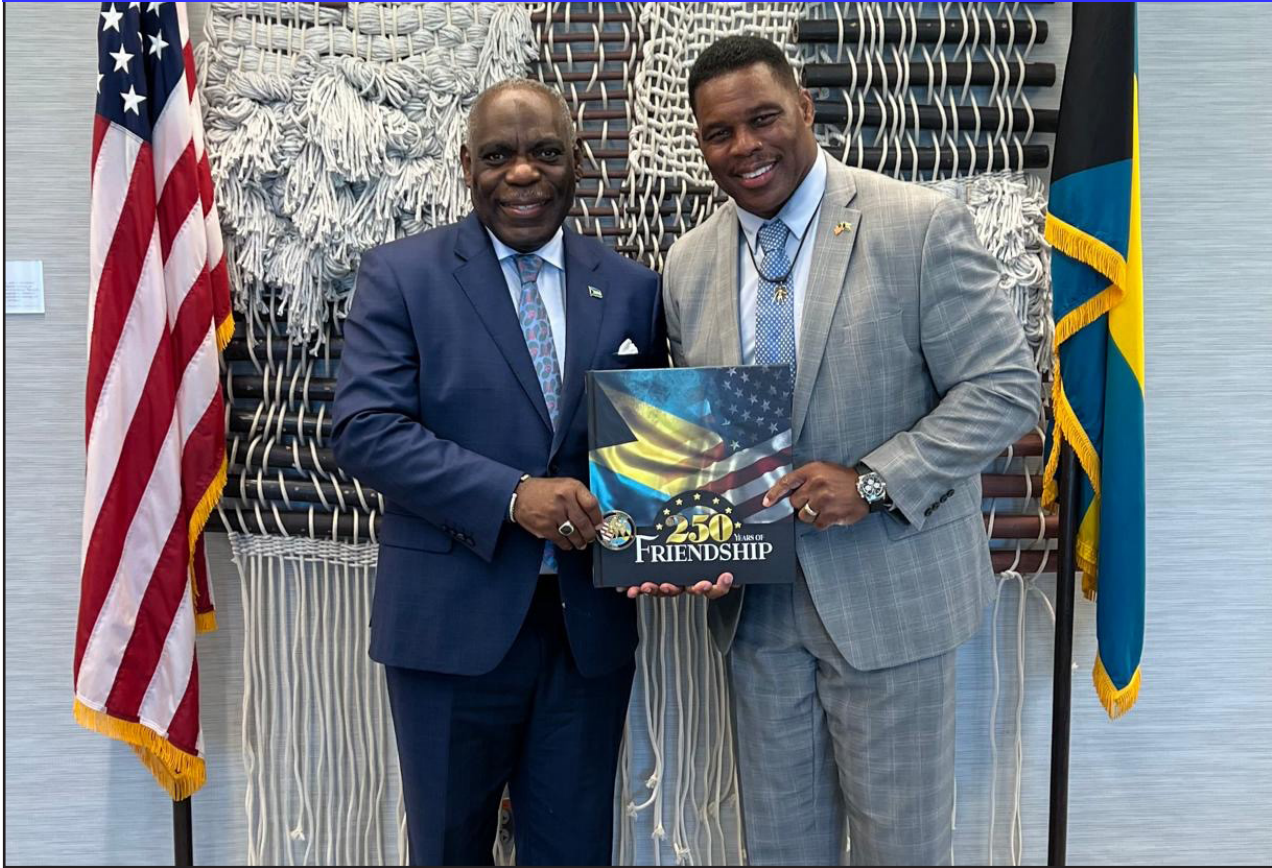
Wells stated that those 2025 statistics represented an increase from the year before and 12 of the 16 were men.

“That represents 75%, those numbers alone demand our attention nationally but perhaps even more concerning is what we are learning about our boys,” he continued.

He explained young people in The Bahamas experience concerns with depression, anxiety self-harm and suicidal thoughts. Wells sated men are carrying difficult situations without knowing how to cope or feeling safe enough to talk about it.

See Story Cont. Pg.4

THE BAHAMAS AND THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA CELEBRATE 250 YEARS OF FRIENDSHIP



The Bahamas Ambassador to The United States of America His Excellency Wendall K. Jones this week presented a copy of Jones Communications Network's newest publication, “250 Years of Friendship” to United States Ambassador to The Bahamas His Excellency Herschel Walker. The coffee table book was produced in commemoration of the 250th Anniversary of Independence of the United States of America. The book features articles and historic photographs that tell the story of the spectacular friendship between The Bahamas and the United States.

ROKERS POINT PRIMARY RENAMED IN HONOUR OF EDUCATION PIONEER

BY TYNIA BROWN
Journal Staff Writer



Hon. I. Chester Cooper
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education

Rokers Point Primary School in Exuma has been renamed the Pembroke Ferguson Primary School, paying tribute to an educator whose service to The Bahamas spanned nearly half a century.

Pembroke Eugene Ferguson dedicated 47 years to the country's education system, serving in Crooked Island and San Salvador before returning to his native Exuma, where he spent 21 years as principal of Rokers Point All-Age School.

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education, Science and Technology Chester Cooper said the recognition was long overdue, revealing that the Ferguson family's request to rename the school had been pursued for about two decades.

Cooper, who is also the Member of Parliament for Exuma and Ragged Island, said Ferguson's contribution extended far beyond the classroom, with his commitment to education, faith and public service continuing through generations of his family.

“People like Pembroke Ferguson helped to hold communities together,” Cooper said, adding that the stories of educators, pastors, nurses, public servants and community leaders form part of the country's national inheritance.

See Story Cont. Pg.4

PM VISITS ADELAIDE PRIMARY ON LITERACY DAY



In celebration of Literacy Day on Wednesday, Prime Minister Hon. Philip Davis, KC visited the students of Adelaide Primary School, encouraging them to discover the power of reading, learning and dreaming big. Mr. Davis to the students the book Lilly's Vacation to the Bahamas. This is book by Bahamian authors Trevel and Robyn Evans, giving students the opportunity to experience a story that celebrates our country, culture and the joy of discovery.

WILSON: PARENTS SHOULD PAY FOR ENGLISH LESSONS FOR NON-ENGLISH-SPEAKING STUDENTS

BY TYNIA BROWN
Journal Staff Writer

Bahamas Union of Teachers President Belinda Wilson says parents of non-English-speaking students should pay for English lessons before their children enter the public school system, as concerns over language barriers in classrooms continue to fuel debate between educators and education officials.

Wilson said Creole-speaking students are enrolled in schools throughout The Bahamas and maintained that the language barrier remains a challenge for teachers.

“We have brought that to the attention not only of the Ministry of Education but the public, that there are Creole-speaking students all throughout schools in The Bahamas,” Wilson said.

She acknowledged that children cannot be denied access to education but argued that students should have sufficient command of English to communicate with their teachers.

Wilson supported English as a Second Language programs but said the responsibility of teaching English should not be added to the workload of regular classroom teachers.

“The ESL, yes, but I think it should be in addition to what it is they're doing. I don't think the teacher should have to be teaching it,” she said. Wilson pointed to a program operated by a Haitian woman that she said has previously helped children learn English before entering government schools.

Asked whether the government should fund such programs, Wilson said parents should pay.



Belinda Wilson
BUT President

See Story Cont. Pg.2

PARENTS SHOULD PAY FOR ENGLISH LESSONS FOR NON-ENGLISH-SPEAKING STUDENTS

See Story Cont. From Pg.1

“I don’t think the government should fund it. I think their parents should fund it because you’re getting education free of charge,” she said. “I think their parents should fund them learning English and ensure that thereafter they’re enrolled in our public schools.”

The comments come amid an ongoing debate over how the public education system should accommodate students who enter classrooms with limited English proficiency.

The BUT has previously raised concerns about what it describes as a growing number of students who cannot speak or understand English well, particularly Haitian Creole-speaking students. The union has argued that the situation makes classroom instruction more difficult and that teachers have not been given sufficient training or resources to address the language barrier.

Education officials, however, have previously disputed suggestions that the problem is widespread. Director of Education Dominique McCartney-Russell has said there is no evidence that large numbers of students across the system cannot speak English.

The Ministry has also pointed to measures used to assist students facing language barriers, including pairing students with bilingual peers. The union has questioned whether teachers have been adequately trained or resourced to implement such measures.

The language debate has surfaced elsewhere in the country’s education system. In 2023, the BUT raised concerns about the English proficiency of some Cuban teachers recruited by the government amid teacher shortages, claiming communication difficulties were affecting students.

Minister of Education Chester Cooper said Tuesday he was not aware of specific complaints about Creole-speaking students but insisted the Ministry’s policy is to intervene whenever students struggle with English, literacy, or other areas.

“What we are focused on in the classroom is numeracy and literacy of every child. Every child matters,” Cooper said.

He said students are periodically assessed to identify learning gaps and maintained that intervention is critical when deficiencies are found.

“If a child cannot read and comprehend, they don’t do well in mathematics or science or any other subject,” Cooper said.

Wilson acknowledged children’s right to education, saying students cannot simply be denied entry into the public system because they do not speak English. However, she maintained that more must be done to ensure students can communicate effectively in the classroom.

FOCUS ON MEN AND BOYS

See Story Cont. From Pg.1



Dr. Michael Darville
Minister of Health and Wellness

W e l l s claimed men suffer in silence and are often told to “suck it up.” “What happens when a boy interprets these words to mean the he should never admit to when he is afraid, overwhelmed, lonely or hurting,” he said.

W e l l s noted the most important responsibility is to redefine the word strength so men can understand that it is okay to be heard and supported.

Minister of Health and Wellness Dr. Michael Darville spoke about some of the steps the government is taking to address the issue.

“Let me reassure the general public that the government of the Bahamas remains in translating this message into action through the mental health and suicide prevention strategic plans,” Darville said.

Darville stated that part of this government initiative includes funding to the Bahamas Crisis Center for assistance with the counselling of at-risks individuals who struggle with suicidal thoughts or have attempted suicide.

“Going forward we will support ongoing suicide awareness initiatives and fund by-monthly seminars to strengthen the knowledge of practical skills of health care workers and other frontline personnel to help identify and appropriate managing persons with suicidal ideation,” he explained.

Executive Director of Bahamas Association for Social Health (BASH), Terry Miller who said he attempted suicide more than once, recalled his first time attempt at suicide because of his struggle with substance abuse.

Miller stated that on a Christmas Eve night he dropped his wife and daughter off at the Queen’s College Auditorium and did not return. He stated that he did not see them until 6 p.m. on Christmas Day because he decided to go and use drugs.

W e l l s claimed men suffer in silence and are often told to “suck it up.” “What happens when a boy interprets these words to mean the he should never admit to when he is afraid, overwhelmed, lonely or hurting,” he said.

“I don’t know how they got home. I don’t know what they went through when they didn’t see me. I could only imagine the pain my daughter went through in that moment,” Miller said.

He explained upon arriving home he felt so hopeless and ashamed he resorted to taking over 50 pills in efforts to end his own life. Miller described his addiction as “hell” and no longer wanting to live despite growing up in a Christian household that regarded suicide as one of the biggest sins.

“I was praying this would be the end but God had another plan. Instead of sleeping I was wide awake. I couldn’t sleep for another 24 hours, I had to face the music,” Miller added.

Miller also noted his second attempt at suicide when he had planned to drop is daughter to Queens College School in the morning and then his wife to work at the airport. Later he planned to drive off Clifton Pier.

“The thing is that sometimes we don’t think to talk to anyone. There were many people that I could’ve talked to but I had just reached to the point where I made up my mind,” Miller explained.

“I picked them up and I was about to take my daughter to school but my wife said take me to work. I said why should I take you to work and its quarter to nine?” he continued.

“My daughter will be late for school, let me take her to school and I’ll take you to work. She said no, take me to work,” Miller added.

He then proceeded to drop his wife to work and stated that his daughter spent the entire day with him and he could no longer go through with his plan of suicide.

Miller became emotional as he said, “A 12-year-old girl saved my life. She’s now 48 years old and God had a vision for me.”

“So, brothers and sisters when you reach your lowest point, that’s the time God is working with you. He got a plan for your life,” he added.

He continued, “You just need to make it through those couple of hours. If you make it through those couple of hours you can make it through another 48 years.”

The month of September is being observed as suicide prevention month.



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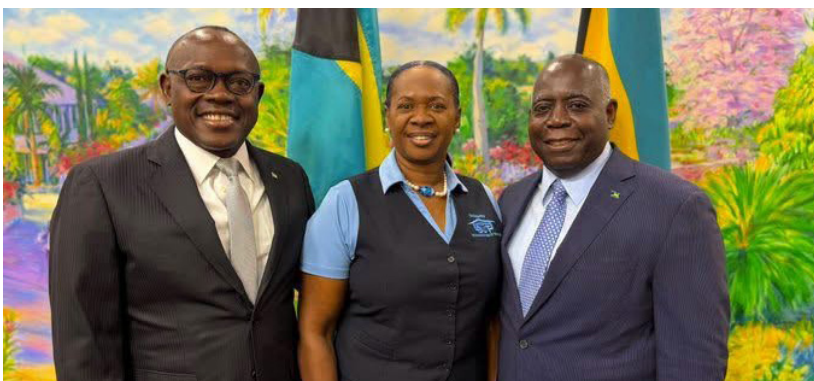


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GOVERNMENT AND BUT REACH FIVE-YEAR INDUSTRIAL AGREEMENT

BY TYNIA BROWN
Journal Staff Writer



Prime Minister the Hon. Philip Davis is photographed with Deputy Prime Minister Hon. I. Chester Cooper and BUT President Belinda Wilson.

The government and The Bahamas Union of Teachers (BUT) have reached an agreement that will increase the maximum teacher salary to \$54,000 and provide lump-sum payments in the third and fifth years of a new five-year industrial agreement.

Minister of Education Chester Cooper announced Tuesday that negotiations between the two sides had concluded following talks involving Prime Minister Philip Davis, the minister of finance and the minister responsible for the public service.

“We have an agreement with the Bahamas Union of Teachers that concludes the negotiations, and we now can confirm that we are working harmoniously together to drive the revolution in education that I’ve been speaking about,” Cooper said. “This is a positive outcome. It’s a great day for education.”

Cooper declined to disclose the details of the agreement, saying it would be inappropriate to do so before it is formally executed. He said the signing is now “just a matter of logistics.”

However, BUT President Belinda Wilson outlined several of the financial provisions agreed to during negotiations, saying the union was “elated” that its outstanding financial matters had been addressed.

Under the agreement, which will cover 2025 to 2030, the entry-level salary for teachers will increase to \$30,100, while the maximum of the salary scale will rise to \$54,000. Teachers will also receive a \$750

lump-sum payment in the third year of the agreement and a \$700 payment in year five.

“We were wrangling over a lump-sum payment in year three and a lump-sum payment in year five. We were able to agree to both of them,” Wilson said.

She added that several islands previously excluded from hardship allowances have now been included. The union had initially pushed for a three-year agreement, but Wilson confirmed that it ultimately accepted the government’s five-year proposal with a provision allowing either side to return to the negotiating table within three years.

“We did agree to the five-year agreement with a caveat that either party can come back to the negotiation table within three years,” she said.

Wilson said an earlier proposal for a 20 percent increase over three years was pulled back as the union developed a five-year proposal alongside the government’s offer.

She said teachers could begin receiving the salary increases as early as this month’s payday once the agreement is signed and registered. If that does not happen, she expects the increases to be reflected next month.

The increases will be retroactive to July 1, meaning affected teachers would receive money owed for July, August and September.

“We’re pleased with what we’ve gotten today, and I think our members will be very, very happy,” Wilson said. The final document is expected to be cleaned up and signed within days.

ROKERS POINT PRIMARY RENAMED IN HONOUR OF EDUCATION PIONEER

See Story Cont. From Pg.1

Ferguson’s granddaughter, Westerlyn Ferguson, said his influence can still be seen in the lives of those he taught.

“His principles of discipline and hard work have shaped the lives of thousands of his students,” she said, noting that many continue to make valuable contributions to The Bahamas.

Prime Minister Philip Davis said the renaming ensures Ferguson’s contribution will remain visible to generations of students who pass through the school.

“A school’s name tells a story long before the first lesson begins,” Davis said, noting that Ferguson spent almost half a century

“opening classroom doors, shaping futures, and believing in the limitless potential of Bahamian children.”

Davis said Ferguson represented a generation of Bahamian educators who understood that teaching extended beyond the classroom and was ultimately about serving and building communities.

He encouraged students to remember the example behind the name each time they enter the school, saying Ferguson’s life demonstrated the transformative power of education, service, and commitment to community.

MEMORIAL HELD FOR R.M. BAILEY STUDENT

BY MAKEIRA TUCKER
Journal Staff Writer



early Monday morning.

Shari Russell, principal of R.M. Bailey Senior Highschool, described Anton as an intelligent, top performing student.

“Anton was a top stream student who did well academically. He made us proud in the classroom, especially in the technical studies program,” Russell said.

She also acknowledged that Anton’s personality went beyond the classroom. Russell called him a giver amongst his friends, stating that he was always willing to treat them to lunch.

Also in attendance was Parliamentary Secretary Keenan Johnson, who stated although he did not know Anton personally, he was showing his support for the teachers and administrators.

Scores of students and loved ones gathered to remember the life of young Anton Bowe, just one day after the 16-year-old R.M. Bailey student was fatally struck by lightning

“I’m offering my condolences to you because so many of you teachers and administrators go above and beyond and because you go above and beyond, these children are like your children and so we grieve with you as well,” Johnson explained. Johnson also encouraged students to support one another during this hard time and to keep Anton’s memory alive by the way they speak about him.

“And to the students, I know you’re hurting, and I ask you one thing and one thing only: don’t hurt alone. The person next to you is hurting as well. We talked about ensuring that Anton’s legacy lives on,” Johnson continued.

Clifton Carey, the Physical Education teacher at R.M. Bailey, recalled fond memories about Anton’s character.

“Anton was one of those kids who was always smiling, who was always jolly, and for his class he was a class leader. So hopefully someone will step up and take his place and be a second Anton,” Carey said.

Anton’s Mathematics teacher, Delmon Rolle, stated that he was a great student who would brighten his day after a rough teaching day.

“Let’s say I had period one, two and three. By the time period four comes and Anton reaches the room, I’m glad,” Rolle explained.

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AMBASSADOR JONES SPEAKS ON “250 YEARS OF FRIENDSHIP”

BY GERRINO J SAUNDERS
Journal News Editor

The International Club of Annapolis (ICA) is a non-profit membership organization founded in 1962, whose mission is to bring together people in the Annapolis, Maryland area who have an interest in international affairs. At its most recent meeting this week, Ambassador of The Bahamas to the United States of America H.E. Wendall K. Jones had the honour to address club members while speaking on the topic of 250 Years of Friendship Between The Bahamas and The United States.

Joining a long list of distinguished ambassadors, professors and internationalists who have addressed the club over the many years, Ambassador Jones took the opportunity to enlighten the members on the history, culture and the connections between The Bahamas and the United States.

He noted that the story is older than both countries reaching as far back as 1492 when in The Bahamas two worlds met for the first time — the Lucayan people, who had lived on those islands for centuries, and the Europeans who came ashore with Christopher Columbus.

He suggested, “The modern history of this hemisphere — its peoples, its trade, its commerce — begins on a Bahamian beach, and The Bahamas has stood at the crossroads of the Americas ever since. But the chapter of that story that concerns us tonight was written much later, and I have a particular reason to be glad to be telling it in Annapolis.

“In January 1784, in the State House a few streets from here, the Congress of the United States ratified the Treaty of Paris and brought the American Revolution formally to its end. Most Americans know that treaty as the birth certificate of their country. Fewer know that it was also, in a manner of speaking, the birth certificate of mine — because when that war ended, thousands of Loyalists left the Carolinas and Georgia, and they went to The Bahamas. So, our chapter of the story began, in law, in this town.”

Ambassador Jones noted that on the 250th anniversary of American independence, a great deal is being said about friendship between nations.

He said, “Let me offer you a simpler test, and hold you to it as I speak. A friend knows you as you are. A friend understands where you have been. A friend accepts what you have become — and still allows you to grow. I will tell you at the end where those words come from.

I. KNOW US AS WE ARE

The Ambassador said while most Americans know The Bahamas as sun, sand and sea, it has also been recognized as the third border of the United States as

the two countries share the same waters, the same winds and the same weather.

He said, “It was to Bimini that the late Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. came to fish, and to write — it was there, in 1964, that he drafted the speech he gave in Oslo to accept the Nobel Peace Prize.”

“We are an international financial centre. We are a nation whose first industry is tourism, and whose every effort is bent on making that industry broader and safer, so that whoever you are, you may enjoy our islands in safety and in welcome. We are a parliamentary democracy, fifty-three years independent, that has never once transferred power by anything other than the ballot box,” Ambassador Jones said proudly as he presented the Bahamian people as the country’s greatest asset.

He said, “While we are not a country of oil, gold or diamonds. Our wealth is our location, our stability, the soundness of our institutions, and the quality of our people. That is who we are.”

II. UNDERSTAND WHERE WE HAVE BEEN

Here is where the story deepens said Ambassador Jones “because where we have been, we have been together.”

He went on to replay the arrival of the Loyalists who sailed from the Carolinas in 1783, bringing to The Bahamas with them men and women they held in bondage who planted cotton in the southeastern islands of The Bahamas. And when cotton failed many of the planters went home to America, while many of the enslaved people stayed, and in time became the owners and occupiers of the very land on which they had been made to labour.

Continuing his message of where The Bahamas has been Ambassador Jones said, “The threads run in every direction. The Gullah Geechee families of the Carolina Lowcountry appear in our family trees; a Bahamian walking in Charleston finds street names he knows from home, and a pot of peas and rice on a Sunday table. In the 1820s, Black Seminoles fleeing Florida crossed the Gulf Stream and made a home at Red Bays on Andros, where their descendants live today,

“And the thread runs north. Bahamians from Abaco were among the first settlers of Key West. Bahamian workers helped build early Miami and were much of its labour force in its first decades — they laid its railway and bought land in Coconut Grove long before the great Latin American migrations that shape South Florida today. It is fitting that the leaders of Miami have now named a district of that city ‘Little Bahamas’. They did not invent a



His Excellency Wendall K. Jones, Ambassador of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas to the United States of America was the speaker at the Dinner Meeting of the International Club of Annapolis in Annapolis, Maryland on Wednesday, September 9th. Ambassador Jones spoke on the topic “250 Years of Friendship Between The Bahamas and The United States Of America.”

history. They recognised one.”

Ambassador Jones then remembered the days of the Contract. Beginning in 1943, when American men went to war and American farms went short of hands, and continuing until 1965, some thirty thousand Bahamians were recruited to work the fields of the United States — from Florida clear to Minnesota. He said during those times no passport was needed to cross between our countries in either direction.

He said that programme fed the United States in wartime. It reshaped Bahamian society, and it built the Bahamian middle class, and since then generations of Bahamians have been educated in American schools and universities, and hold key roles today in every aspect of the Bahamian society. Ambassador Jones also reminded that The Bahamas and United States have been together at sea.

“The U.S. is a Navy town,” he said. “From the Second World War onward the United States maintained bases across our islands — Mayaguana, San Salvador, Eleuthera, Grand Bahama and

Cay Sal — several of which went on to serve the early NASA space programme. Most have closed. One remains: the Atlantic Undersea Test and Evaluation Center at Fresh Creek, Andros — AUTEK — where the United States Navy conducts undersea research today, and a partnership no Bahamian government of either party has ever questioned.”

“And since 1982, through Operation Bahamas, Turks and Caicos — OPBAT — our forces and yours have patrolled together the hundred thousand square miles of water that every trafficker in drugs and in human beings must cross to reach the United States from the south. The Bahamas has spent hundreds of millions of dollars of its own money in that effort. We do it because the security of that sea is indivisible. That is where we have been. Together,” said Ambassador Jones.

III. ACCEPT WHAT WE HAVE BECOME

Speaking quite plainly the Ambassador admitted that many Bahamians are “puzzled” and in

some cases “wounded”, when after two and a half centuries of this history The Bahamas finds itself on a list.

Explaining he said, “On July 24th this year, the United States imposed a tariff of 12.5 percent on Bahamian exports, on a finding that The Bahamas had not adequately prohibited the import of goods made with forced labour. Let me be clear about what that finding was not. It was not a finding that forced labour exists in The Bahamas. What we sell to America is, overwhelmingly, what our fishermen pull from our own waters — crawfish and stone crab, caught by Bahamian men in Bahamian boats under Bahamian law.

“The finding concerned a gap in our statute book — that we had no law of our own barring forced-labour goods from entering The Bahamas. Consider what that gap amounted to. More than 80 percent of everything we import comes from the United States itself. I take it no one in Washington believes those are the product of forced labour.”

Story continued on Pg.5

JUNKANOO! GROUPS RECEIVE BOXING AND NEW YEARS’ DAY SEED FUNDING

BY GERRINO J SAUNDERS
Journal News Editor

The trash talking has already begun, even before the government officially presented each registered junkanoo group with the seed funding to help them prepare for the 2026 Boxing Day parade and the 2027 New Years’ Day parade during a presentation ceremony this week at Super Clubs Breezes.

Although there is stiff competition throughout, all eyes will be on the A-Category where One Family Warriors upset the four-time back-to-back champion Saxon Super Stars to win both the 2025 Boxing Day and the 2026 New Years’ Day crown.

The Minister of Culture, Arts and Heritage Leslia Miller-Brice had the honour of launching the new season. Speaking to leaders and representatives from the various groups including from Grand Bahama and a number of Family Islands she said, “Welcome

to the official opening of the 2026-2027 junkanoo season. Tonight, the season begins. The shacks are alive, the drums are calling and the cowbells are ready, and once again The Bahamas is ready to rush.”

Receiving funding were eight A-category groups, 10 from the B-category and a more than 20 groups in the D-category and Fun-category.

The Government of The Bahamas will provide more than \$700,000 in funding with the A-groups receiving \$40,000, B-groups receiving \$20,000 D-groups \$2,000 and those in the fun category received \$2,000 to be spent on getting each group prepared for Bay Street and actually getting to Bay Street.

Meanwhile, the groups from Grand Bahama received a total of approximately \$72,000 in seed funding, with the other Family

Islands receiving a total of \$120,000.

Each group is required to sign a contract ensuring that the funds are used for the desired purposes.

Miller-Brice reminded that Junkanoo is more than Bay Street. She said, “It is more than Boxing Day, it is more than New Year’s Day, and it is certainly more than Nassau. Junkanoo lives across the islands of The Bahamas, it lives in our shops, it lives in our communities, our schools, and our homes. It lives in the months of preparation before a single group reaches the parade route.”

Continuing she spoke about the government and the new National Junkanoo Authority vision to make Junkanoo accessible year-round through schools and tourism, beyond the traditional parade dates.

There have been quite a number of off-season events that have been popping up in recent years like the

Bahamas Junkanoo Music festival where groups will reportedly battle using just raw music and dancers without the brass section as they compete for huge sums of money. The competition set for October 2-4 at Montague Beach and Park with free admission and will feature Genesis, 1958 Valley Boys, One Family, Saxons, and Way Forward Valley Boys.

Miller-Brice explained that her ministry has also begun gathering information on the sustainability of Junkanoo and the condition and needs of Junkanoo shacks.

Additionally, she said, “As we enter another season, let it also be one marked by respect and responsibility. Let us compete fiercely but respectfully. Let us celebrate loudly but safely. Let us look out for one another and be our brother’s keeper. Let us protect our children and our young people. Let us respect our groups, our officials, and the people who work behind the scenes. And when the competition is over, let us remember that while we may rush under different banners, we all carry the same culture.”

National Junkanoo Authority Chairman Dr Christopher Curry welcomed the group representatives

to the occasion. He informed that members of the authority recently received their appointment letters and that the board has held two meetings.

As for the new process of having groups sign contracts as opposed to simply awarding the funds blindly which is the past has led to the abuse of funds by some groups.

He said, “We want to be financially viable, and of course, we work closely with the ministry and our minister to pull this event off. We had to get contracts collaboratively done with the ministry and with our authority, so that the Junkanoo season could be launched tonight, and so of course we’re moving forward very fast. But of course, being prudent with what we do as an authority.”

According to Dr. Curry an election is to be held this week to determine which Junkanoo group representatives will fill six seats on the Management and Planning Committee of the National Junkanoo Authority. Two delegates from each Junkanoo group will participate in the initial planning stages of the parades, with the first session scheduled for today (Sept 11th).

AMBASSADOR JONES SPEAKS ON “250 YEARS OF FRIENDSHIP”

See Story Cont. From Pg.4

Ambassador Jones then informed that since then the gap is closed as this year the Bahamian Parliament amended the Customs Management Act to give the Minister express power to bar any goods, from any source, where there are reasonable grounds to believe they are the product of forced labour.

He noted that The Bahamas honours its obligations to the International Labour Organization and the United Nations, and abhors forced labour wherever it is found.

“We have asked the United States to remove The Bahamas from this grouping. We do not ask to be excused from the standards that apply to every nation. We ask to be judged by our record and by the law now on our books. A friend accepts what you have become. We have become a sovereign, mature, law-abiding democracy. We ask to be treated as one,” said Ambassador Jones.

IV. ALLOW US TO GROW

In this segment of his presentation Ambassador Jones shared with his audience the standards set by Sir Lynden Pindling who set out the Bahamian doctrine at independence in 1973 that reads “friends of all, foes of none.” He said, “We have kept to this for 53 years.

We ask only what we offer: respect for sovereignty, and room to determine our own course.”

He admitted that The Bahamas has benefited greatly from its proximity to the United States, and is grateful for it, but said The Bahamas has been “troubled of late, to see tariffs and talk of further measures, applied to matters that two neighbours could settle across a table. We have opened our doors to American business and American visitors — to the cruise lines, to the mariners who fish our waters — and we have done so gladly. So close a relationship asks for reciprocity, and we ask for nothing more.”

Continuing Ambassador Jones touched on concerns in the financial services sector. “We ask only that the rules that apply in Delaware, in Nevada or in New York be applied equally to The Bahamas. And let me be direct: we maintain a well-regulated international financial sector, in full compliance with international rules and best practice.”

“There is one more matter on which we ask our friends to hear us. The Bahamas lives with the sea, and the sea is changing. It is a first principle of our foreign policy — expressed around the world by both our Prime Minister and our Minister of Foreign

Affairs — to ask the global community to reckon honestly with what a warming climate is doing to small island nations,” he said.

“We do not speak from theory. When Hurricane Dorian sat over Abaco and Grand Bahama for the better part of two days in 2019, it took scores of lives, with hundreds more never found, and did some \$3.5 billion dollars in damage — roughly a quarter of our national income, in a single weekend. The United States Coast Guard was lifting our people from rooftops in Abaco before the wind had fully died, and we have not forgotten it.

“But the work of climate finance — helping nations like ours build back stronger than the next storm — has lost momentum in recent years, and that momentum must be regained. That, too, is what it means to allow a small country to grow,” Ambassador Jones argued.

As he approached the end of his presentation Ambassador Jones said another truth about Bahamians that our neighbours the United States sometimes miss is the fact that Bahamians love home.

He said, “Among all the countries that surround the United States, our record on immigration and on the law speaks for itself.

Give a Bahamian the right to travel freely and lawfully between our two countries, and he will go — and he will come back. A Bahamas that grows is a Bahamas whose people stay, and prosper, and remain the good neighbours they have always been. Our growth is not a cost to the United States. It is a benefit to it. Allow us to grow, and we will grow as your friend.”

“I promised to tell you where my test of friendship came from. The words have long been attributed to Shakespeare — and whether or not he wrote them, I have not heard the thing put better: That is what we ask of our neighbour. Know us as we are. Understand where we have been — together. Accept what we have become. And allow us to grow,” said Ambassador Jones.

“We are a small country. We have never mistaken smallness for insignificance, and we do not ask our friends to do so either. What we offer the United States is what we have always offered: a neighbour that keeps its word, a coastline that has always been its third border, and a people who are, in truth, its cousins. Two hundred and fifty years is a long time for a friendship. It is a very short time for a family,” Ambassador Jones said in his conclusion.

GOVERNMENT TO REVIEW ELECTION OBSERVERS REPORTS

BY GERRINO J SAUNDERS

Journal News Editor

Although there were some sharp criticisms and strong recommendations made by both the Commonwealth and Caribbean Community (CARICOM) election observer groups in their final reports, the Government of The Bahamas through the Office of the Prime Minister has expressed its “sincere appreciation” to the international election observers who were present in The Bahamas for the May 12th recent General Election.

While the CARICOM observers released their report on August 6th the Commonwealth observers report was officially released this week even though there were reports of comments made by former Jamaican Prime Minister Bruce Golding who led the Commonwealth group that identified several long-standing areas of concern where reform would help strengthen electoral governance and address concerns raised by stakeholders during the electoral process.

The statement by the Office of the Prime Minister thanked the observer teams for the “professionalism and independence with which they carried out their work, and for the time devoted to engaging with public officials, political parties, civil society, election administrators and Bahamian citizens.”

It said the government welcomes the role of independent election observation in supporting confidence in democratic institutions and electoral processes.

“We will carefully review the findings and recommendations contained in their report and consider them as part of our continued work to strengthen the administration of elections in The Bahamas. The Bahamas has a proud democratic tradition, and the Government remains committed to protecting the integrity of our electoral system, respecting the will of the Bahamian people and maintaining public confidence in our democratic institutions,” the statement read.

In its report the Commonwealth group said it found that the general election was credible, peaceful and competitive but called for key reforms to strengthen electoral governance and public confidence ahead of future polls.

The final report commends the professionalism of election officials and security personnel, and the orderly conduct of polling day.

The observers found that voters were able to exercise their democratic rights freely and that the election was administered largely in accordance with the law.

However, there were concerns regarding the management of the election by the Parliamentary Registration Department under the guidance of Parliamentary Commission Harrison Thompson and his team.

The Commonwealth observers recommended the establishment of an independent electoral management authority responsible for voter registration and the conduct of elections, the enactment of comprehensive campaign finance legislation, and the adoption of a political code of conduct to promote agreed standards of behaviour during election campaigns.

The Minister of National Security Myles Laroda agrees that the registration and management of the elections could be privatized.

Just two weeks ago, he admitted that there could be improvements in some areas, but maintained that the will of the people on the outcome of the election was

not hampered in any meaningful way.

He said, “I do agree that the Parliamentary Registration Department should be an independent body. I do not think, however, that Bahamians question the integrity of the voting. Legitimate complaints about the advanced poll and how long it took for individuals to vote, complaints about how we did not have provisions for the elderly. They are genuine complaints that we could try to rectify. But when you look at the whole process of Bahamians being allowed to demonstrate their vote, I don't think anybody would say that the outcome was because of duress or something untoward.”

Continuing he said, “The Bahamian people spoke and while I would admit that there were some glitches. There are always going to be complaints that are made. That's not just peculiar to The Bahamas. If you look at the world's proudest democracy, the most powerful and advanced countries, with the most advanced equipment and technology, there are complaints about them.”

Also among its principal recommendations by the Commonwealth Group is the establishment of an independent electoral management authority responsible for voter registration and the conduct of elections, the enactment of comprehensive campaign finance legislation, and the adoption of a political code of conduct to promote agreed standards of behaviour during election campaigns.

And one of the most talked about subjects in the country for the past 10 years has been the full implementation of the Freedom of Information Act 2017. The report said this would aid in greater transparency and public consultation in future constituency boundary reviews, and enhanced voter education initiatives to address declining electoral participation amid declining voter turnout.

Voter turnout was very low in many of the inner-city constituencies with many of them seeing under 60 percent of registered voters participating, with those numbers increasing to the 70 percent range on the Family Islands. None of the 41 constituencies saw a voter turnout of more than 77 percent.

The 2021 elections saw the lowest voter turnout in history with just 64.9 percent of the 194,524 registered voters taking part in the process. In the first four general elections since independence 1977-1992 the average voter turnout per election was 91 percent.

Commonwealth Secretary-General Shirley Botchwey, who constituted the Observer Group and received its report, said, “The Bahamas has once again demonstrated democratic resilience through a peaceful and credible election. While the Commonwealth Observer Group has identified areas for reform, these are aimed at building on an already strong democratic foundation.”

Meanwhile, the CARICOM observer group deployed a 12-member observation team to The Bahamas led by Herman St. Helen, Chief Elections Officer of Saint Lucia, and included officials from eight other Member States and three staff members from the CARICOM Secretariat made similar recommendations as they covered 317 of 322 polling divisions on Grand Bahama and New Providence.

The elections, according to the CARICOM group were assessed as “peaceful and credible despite logistical challenges and stakeholder concerns.”

The CEOM also noted the peaceful acceptance of the election results in its 33-page report, that also included recommendations to safeguard electoral integrity and inclusiveness.



Hon. Myles Laroda
The Minister of National Security

MEMORIAL HELD FOR R.M. BAILEY STUDENT

See Story Cont. From Pg.3

The tragedy happened on September 9. Reports stated shortly before 9 a.m., Anton walked through the campus' gates after the security checkpoint and was struck by lightning minutes after. Witnesses said his body became motionless and he was immediately transported to the hospital.

Later that morning, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology released a statement confirming that Anton had succumbed to his injuries and extended condolences to his family and the R.M. Bailey community.

Minister of Education, Science and Technology, Chester Cooper, alongside his team, arrived at the school upon receiving the news.

“We wanted to really be here today, present standing with the family at R.M. Bailey and with the family of the deceased, and we hope that God will give the family strength to understand and to preserve,” Cooper said.

It was revealed that Anton's aunt, who is a teacher at R.M. Bailey school, was inconsolable after the incident. R.M. Bailey students were not dismissed immediately after the tragedy. Director of Education, Science and Technology, Dominique McCartney- Russell explained the importance of early grief counselling.

“We sought to take care of the children, and we sought to take care of the teachers. We did not want to send our children home without saying something to them. We wanted them to leave here with some sort of comfort,” McCartney- Russell explained.

“I think if we allowed them to leave without getting any sort of grief counselling, it would've been even more damaging and traumatic, so we allowed that to happen first and then we called the parents,” she added.

Joycelyn Brown, the parent of a child attending R.M. Bailey, stated that she was purchasing school uniform shirts and couldn't function anymore after hearing the news.

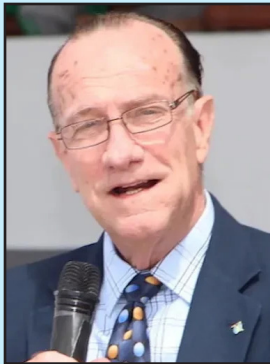
“It could've been my son and when they said it was a male, everything I was doing I just stopped. I'm still anxious right now because it very scary.”

Brown then immediately came to the campus to collect her child.

Cooper stated that they are committed to ensuring all faculty and students of R.M. Bailey have access to adequate grief counselling during this challenging time. Throughout the world, lightning strikes are happening more frequently due to global warming, putting more heat, moisture and unstable energy into the atmosphere. Meteorologist Godfrey Burnside recommended some safety protocols when carrying out daily activities during poor weather conditions.

“It's very important that when you have a thunderstorm you avoid open areas like trees, water, and also chain- link fencing that surround most sporting facilities,” said Burnside.

MR. COLIN HIGGS, APPOINTED SECRETARY TO THE CABINET



The Cabinet Office has announced the appointment of Mr. Colin Higgs, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Health and Wellness, as Secretary to the Cabinet with effect from 1st August, 2026.

Mr. Higgs succeeds Mrs. Nicole Campbell who has retired.

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DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY MARSHALS THE SHIFT TO RESILIENCE



In welcoming remarks at the IDB and Disaster Risk Management (DRM) Authority’s ‘The Whole-of-DRM Symposium,’ held recently at Baha Mar, the Hon. McKell Bonaby, OPM State Minister for Disaster Risk Management said, “Ladies and gentlemen, our national approach to disasters has undergone a fundamental shift.

“We are moving away from a system centred primarily on responding after disaster strikes, toward a comprehensive approach to managing disaster risk before, during and after an event,” he said, as the gathering marked seven years since devastating Hurricane Dorian

State Minister Bonaby said, “In the words of our Prime Minister: ‘We are not waiting until a storm is on the horizon to prepare.’ “

The theme of the forum was ‘Building a More Resilient Bahamas’ with the keynote address delivered by Prime Minister Philip Davis.

Among those present were IDB Chief of Operations at The Bahamas Office Steven Collins; Minister of Finance the Hon. Michael Halkitis; Minister of Energy, Utilities and Aviation, the Hon. JoBeth Coleby-Davis; permanent secretaries and other senior government officials; and various stakeholders.

In the shift to disaster resilience, State Minister Bonaby explained that to comprehensively achieve the desired end -- ‘resilience’ -- the Disaster Risk Management Act, 2022 was implemented to provide the legal foundation for this transformation in preparedness; and as such the Disaster Risk Management Authority was established to achieve the objectives.

“But the DRM framework represents more than an institutional change,” he said. “It represents a change in philosophy and methodology: Firstly, we must identify risk. Secondly, we must reduce risk. Thirdly, we must prepare for risk. And when disaster strikes, we must have the capacity to respond, recover and rebuild stronger.

“That is what moving from recovery to resilience really means.”

State Minister Bonaby said, importantly, the government is putting resources behind that philosophy.

“The Government has established a Disaster Prevention Fund, providing resources for proactive measures such as strengthening shelters, improving communication and early-warning systems, and building community preparedness.

“We have also capitalized the Disaster Emergency Fund with \$17 million, ensuring that when disaster strikes, critical resources are available to support an immediate response.

“Together with insurance protection, contingent credit facilities and other financial instruments, we are building a layered system of disaster-risk financing — because a natural disaster should not automatically become a fiscal disaster for our country.

“This is especially important for an archipelagic nation like ours.”

State Minister Bonaby added that resilience in The Bahamas must be comprehensive and shared equally among the inhabitants of all our islands, not only New Providence.

“Our people expect each of us to continue to work while it is yet day. Every island matters. Every community matters. From our largest population centres to our smallest settlements, no island and no community can be left behind. That is why investments in resilient infrastructure are also critical.

“This is evidenced by the completion of the Abaco Multipurpose Hurricane Shelter, designed to provide protection during storms as powerful as Category Five. It represents the kind of investment that must increasingly define our national approach.

“We can no longer afford to wait and see.

“But buildings and funding alone will not make us

resilient. Building capacity is critical. Resilience requires trained personnel. It requires informed communities. It requires reliable communication. It requires strong leadership and coordination. And it requires all of us to understand that disaster preparedness is a shared responsibility.

“That responsibility cannot be isolated to government entities alone. It must be shared with our people.

“This is why the work of the Disaster Risk Management Authority must extend beyond institutions and connect directly with communities throughout our islands.”

He continued: “We must strengthen our human capacity. Initiatives such as the National Youth Guard and community preparedness programmes are therefore an important part of building a culture of preparedness. But government cannot accomplish this alone. Building a more resilient Bahamas requires strong partnerships” -- partnerships across government ministries and agencies, private sector, churches and civil society, communities, and with regional and international institutions.

“In this regard,” he said: “I wish to recognize the Inter-American Development Bank. The IDB has been an important partner in strengthening our disaster-risk-management framework, including supporting the development of our Comprehensive Financial Strategy for Disaster Risk Management and broader initiatives to improve our resilience.

“This partnership reminds us of something fundamental: Resilience is not built by one project. It is not built by one ministry. It is not built by one institution. Resilience is built when systems, institutions and people work together.

Prime Minister Davis has also said: ‘We cannot prevent storms from forming, but we can strengthen our nation’s capacity to withstand and recover from them.’

“That, ladies and gentlemen, is the challenge before us.”



MINISTER COOPER EXPLORES OPPORTUNITIES TO STRENGTHEN EDUCATION AND SKILLS TRAINING IN GRAND BAHAMA

Minister of Education, Science and Technology, the Hon. Chester Cooper, along with Minister for Grand Bahama, the Hon. Ginger Moxey visited several educational institutions across Grand Bahama, engaging with students, teachers and administrators while assessing school improvements and exploring opportunities to strengthen technical and tertiary education.

During visits to St. George's High School and Jack Hayward Junior High School, Minister Cooper engaged with students and reviewed school repairs and electrical upgrades.

Minister Cooper also toured the Bahamas Technical and Vocational Institute (BTVI) and the University of The Bahamas (UB) Northern Campus, emphasising the importance of connecting education and workforce development.

He highlighted opportunities to better align BTVI programmes with the needs of

Grand Bahama's industrial and maritime sectors including the demand for skilled workers such as welders. He also discussed stronger collaboration between BTVI and UB, including potential certification programmes for technical education teachers.

Minister Cooper said additional initiatives are being developed to encourage greater participation among young men in tertiary education including scholarships and other support through a pilot programme in Grand Bahama.

He also identified student housing as an important factor in expanding enrolment on the island.

"I think Grand Bahama can really be a university town, a hub where family islanders come to Grand Bahama for education," he said.

The Minister stressed that the government remains committed to strengthening the entire education system from early childhood through tertiary education.



OFFICIAL NAMING CEREMONIES FOR THE SITE OF BAHAMAS HOLISTIC SICKLE CELL CENTRE

The Bahamas Sickle Cell Association, during September, Sickle Cell Awareness Month, conducted official naming ceremonies for the site of the Holistic Sickle Cell Centre on Carmichael Road West, September 3, 2026, under the theme, 'Building Hope. Building Futures.'

In attendance at the ceremonies and giving Remarks was Prime Minister, the Hon. Philip Davis. Also present were the Hon. Darron Pickstock, Minister of State for Immigration in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Ms. Kristin Butler-Beneby, President of the Bahamas Sickle Cell Association; the Hon. Owen Wells, Minister of State in the Ministry of Health and Wellness; Randy Rolle, Chairman of the Consumer Protection Commission; Ms. Kayla Smith, Immediate Past-President of the Bahamas Sickle Cell Association; and Pastor, Apostle Phalmon Ferguson.

