

Canadian Volunteers Bring

Hope For Youth In Bisee

HIGH-risk youth, and in the Castries North community of Bisee will soon be given the opportunity to learn a skill for their future development.

In partnership with the Salvation Army and Scotiabank, a Canadian based charity group called HopeLink International, has been in St. Lucia for the past two weeks working at rebuilding and refurbishing

a building in the Bisee Industrial area, which, when completed, will feature a computer lab for literacy training, life skills (leadership and conflict management training) and trade skills development. In the immediate future a

programme for teenage mothers and a youth club will also be established.

"In addition, this would be a sustainable, ongoing, strong spiritually - based programme," said Bob Simpson, Founder and President of HopeLink International.

Simpson said that the programme is expected to change the lives of many young people who, right now, we are losing through teenage pregnancy, school drop-out, drugs, and violence and crime.

Renovation works are currently being carried out by a team of 14 Canadian volunteers, with assistance from residents in the local community.

HopeLink is a non-profit Christian, humanitarian agency that partners with others to show God's love by bringing help and hope to needy children in Canada's Aboriginal communities and the Caribbean. The "role model" image provided by the staff and volunteers who come to give their time and talent, often has the greatest impact on young lives in the communities in which they work.

Heading the HopeLink work crew to St. Lucia is a husband and wife team, Bob and Linda Bergey, from Brampton, Canada.



Hopelink volunteers at the project site in Bisee



SIMPSON

"What we are thrilled about is that we are finding with these volunteers ... there is a certain magic that they motivate some of the locals to want to contribute, and together are making a difference in the lives of these young people," said Simpson.

The group has been instrumental in getting a number of local business houses to make contributions in kind, with the headliner being Harris Paints (St. Lucia) Limited, which donated all the paints needed for the project.

Other major contributors were Capital Management, Carasco & Son, Courts (St. Lucia) Ltd., Government of St. Lucia, Johnson's Hardware Ltd., J. Q. Cement Products, Michel's Electrical, Monplaisir Supplies Ltd., Peter & Company Ltd., Sunbilt Ltd., and Jamecob's Quality Construction Ltd.

Organizers of the HopeLink Youth Training Centre have also held talks with the management of the National Skills Development Centre (NSDC), another skills training institution in the Bisee area, exploring the possibility of getting the latter to assist it with the development of its programmes.

Over the next few months too, members of the HopeLink crew intend to launch a programme aimed at getting residents of the Bisee community acquainted with the work of the Salvation Army, headed by Major Jennifer Brown and Captain Winston Brown.

During the past decade Simpson has spearheaded the construction of a school in Haiti, a children's hospital in the Dominican Republic and a Salvation Army Centre for youth at risk in Bridgetown, Barbados. During the past two years, HopeLink has been involved in the rebuilding of schools in Grenada that were devastated by Hurricane Ivan in 2004.