



***Making Dreams Come True
Convirtiendo Sueños en Realidad***

VIEQUES YOUTH LEADERSHIP INITIATIVE

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Summer 2006

Training Leaders VYLI's 3rd Annual Summer Institute



VYLI's Summer Institute is a week-long intensive training, the centerpiece of our year-round program where we train young and emerging leaders to build a new Vieques. The 3rd annual Summer Institute was a great success -- fifty young people (ages 11-17) had the opportunity to learn how to make their dreams come true. Every morning they expressed their ideas through art and writing exercises, then shared them with others in small and large group presentations. Working with VYLI's faculty, staff and camp counselors they learned how to create action plans to stay focused on their goals during the summer months and school year. They gained courage by listening to teen leaders and adult mentors share their dreams, their stumbling blocks, and ways they overcame them. Each afternoon they participated in hands-on workshops: culinary arts, cultural arts & handicrafts, computers, music & theatre and swimming. In just one week, they accomplished a lot! Six young women experi-

enced being a chef; six young men learned to swim; our young entrepreneurs made beautiful indigenous jewelry; our young actors produced a play; our musicians created VYLI's new themesong and performed it at our graduation and our technology group helped create this newsletter and an inspiring slide show featuring Summer Institute youth. Step-by-step, these young people began to pave the road to their own future.

(cont. page 2).

Taste of the Islands

Culinary artists from the most notable restaurants joined together

July 8 to celebrate the art of fine dining at the Bravo Beach Hotel. This magical evening featured top chefs from Vieques, San Juan and two members of BVI Culinary Team, wine and spirits from top companies -- and resident DJ of the very chic Buddha Bar in New York.

This amazing event was a benefit for VYLI --and a boost for the Island during the summer season -- generating tremendous positive press, attracting many first-time visitors or those returning after 20 years, selling out hotels, creating goodwill and a community of supporters to celebrate VYLI youth.

An evening of great food, wine, event design, entertainment and exciting people who helped raise over \$6,000. We are very grateful to everyone who helped make this such an amazing event.



Graduation



Summer Institute (cont. from p. 1)

This year Vieques youth had a rich cross-cultural exchange with young people from the British Virgin Islands, New York and Puerto Rico – as well as faculty from the Conservatory of Puerto Rico and Oregon. Members of the community shared their gifts as speakers, mentors, supporters, sponsors and businesses provided invaluable training. Viequense leader Carmen Portella Weir facilitated an interactive exchange

with young people on teen pregnancy prevention. Each group presented their action plans for the new Vieques Youth Center to director, Cruz Belardo and the Mayor's representatives. The week culminated in a fabulous pool party at Ileana Cambo and Roberto Cacho's home. Nothing could top the pride we felt on Sunday as we watched our youth perform for their thrilled family and community members and receive their hard-earned graduation certificates!

Culinary Arts Workshop



Chef Kalich Padro and his staff were impressed when six motivated, young women arrived at the door to the Paso Fino kitchen at Martineau Bay Resort & Spa. After receiving a tour, the youth immediately started learning about the rigorous work that a chef faces every day. This great Culinary Arts Workshop made for a five-star experience! Thanks to their mentor, Emily Fletcher chef at The Mineshaft in Virgin Gorda these chefs-in-training developed great action plans to keep themselves on track during the coming years. They even had an inspiring interview and were featured in El Vocero. Our six stars shined!

Theatre Workshop

Actress Melissa Reyes and UPR theatre student Maria Soler challenged Vieques youth with the very sophisticated play, *The Things of Life* by Rene Marquez, a social commentary on Puerto Rico's economic situation in the 1940's and today. Seasoned young actors took the lead roles while new actors had a chance to express their talents. First they learned how to write scripts,



play, rehearse and personify roles; and learn make-up techniques. After a week of intense rehearsals, they magnificently performed their debut to an amazed audience at graduation. One day this Theatre Group may become the pride of our island!

Technology Workshop



This diverse group of youth from Vieques, Fajardo and Jost Van Dyke (BVI) improved their computer skills and expanded their technology awareness. Every afternoon, they worked together to document the progress being made by other Summer Institute workshops – and helped create this issue of the VYLI newsletter. Thanks to our fearless leaders Norma Gonzalez from CREATE in Portland, Oregon and VYLI Technology Coordinator Josué Cruz, this group won the "lemonade award" for overcoming many logistical challenges with flexibility and a positive attitude! Everyone at graduation was excited by their inspiring presentation using Microsoft's software Photo Story!

Jewelry Workshop



Last spring, VYLI leaders Lynda Bayron and Kassandra Castillo participated in the Caribbean Artisans Festival in Tortola. This summer they were inspired to share their gifts this summer and cultivate the creativity of other Vieques youth. Every afternoon, they turned Vieques' natural resources of seeds, beads, shells, seaglass and stones into unique jewelry. The young artisans proudly wore their hand-made crafts; some young entrepreneurs sold their wares at graduation. Kassandra's exquisite pieces were sold at the Taste of the Islands. Proceeds help support her travel to San Juan to participate in the Elite competition (for more see page 3).

Swimming Workshop



Freya and Richard Block were thrilled that six young men learned how to swim in their pool in just one week! Every afternoon from 1-4 p.m. the eager students learned different techniques and swimming stunts: how to dive, swim underwater, freestyle, back-stroke and breast-stroke. With help from Camp Counselors Tania Cruz and Eliasib Utreras, these young athletes overcame language barriers and had a life-changing experience. They even prepared a great performance for the pool party.

Music Workshop



Llanel Rivera and Eliud Vasquez from the Conservatory of Puerto Rico were amazed with the natural talent of the Vieques youth! During the week, they encouraged and coached these young people to develop their talents, write their own songs and accompany their lyrics with piano. They prepared a great performance for graduation that grabbed the audiences' attention!

VYLI Youth Leaders



Phillip Morales Velázquez,
future professional musician

When Phillip Morales Velázquez was just 13, he quit school. In the 7th grade, he was bored, feeling rejected and tired of all the fighting. For two years he just hung around; sometimes he played on a borrowed guitar. One day, Phillip played outside the VYLI offices in Bo. Marripo, where Marianne Larned heard him. "You gave a great gift!" she said, "Would you like a lesson with Tito Auger?" At first, Phillip was very shy, but he couldn't pass up a chance to play with Tito, lead singer and songwriter for Fiel a la Vega! Tito recognized Phillip's great talent and said, "If you go back to school, you can join VYLI." That summer, Phillip checked out VYLI's Summer Institute. He then decided to go back to school – and discovered that he really liked COVEICO. Phillip was really proud on graduation day. He's now enjoying high school. This summer Phillip participated in the whole week-long Summer Institute, training with VYLI faculty from the Conservatory of Puerto Rico and then performing at graduation. Phillip was thrilled when he received a very special graduation gift – his first guitar. Now he practices everyday. Then at the Patronalles, Phillip even sat on the same stage with Tito Auger. Now he's working with VYLI, creating a better life for himself and learning to be a leader to help other Vieques youth. We're hoping that Phillip's life-changing experience will inspire other youth to go back to school, too.

Kassandra Castillo has been selected as a finalist in the prestigious Elite Model Look 2006 competition. The winner will be chosen on September 21 in Normandy Hotel, San Juan. You can see Kassandra's photos by visiting the Elite section of: www.modelospr.com

Josué Cruz Josue Cruz represented VYLI at the Commonwealth Youth Program Caribbean Centre in Tortola. Josue met other youth leaders from 15 countries, shared his dream for building a new Vieques and explored ways to collaborate on projects for our collective future.

Carmen Rosa won 3rd place in the Back-to-School Talent Show in Luquillo on August 12. The 13 year old singer magnificently performed the song El Hombre Que Yo Amo to hundreds of enthusiastic fans. She faced stiff competition against 23 people and impressed hundreds of enthusiastic fans.

Camp Counselors



We are very proud of

Jose Alejandro, Kassandra Castillo, Tania Cruz, Ambar Fontanez, Carmen Rosa, Glenda Sanchez, Nelyris Sanchez and Eliasib Utreras. These graduates of previous VYLI Summer Institute (ages 13-22) served as Camp Counselors at VYLI's 3rd annual Summer Institute.

Building on Dr. Martin Luther King's vision: "Each one, teach one," each Camp Counselor worked hard everyday to help other teens learn how they, too, can make their dreams come true. For several months, they participated in weekly leadership sessions; developed action plans to pursue their own dreams and prepared powerful presentations on their progress. They recruited new candidates, even recording an announcement for the loud-speaker system that drives around the Island. They worked with Project Coordinator Kutasha Silva to make presentations to potential sponsors. On the first day of the Summer Institute, they patiently worked with new youth – helping them fill out their applications, inviting them to begin thinking about their dream for their life, their future and for the future of Vieques. During the week-long intensive, they helped implement VYLI's ground rules – be on time; stay focused on your goals and true to your dreams. They assisted VYLI faculty to maintain cultural sensitivity and maximize learning in the workshops. They worked as a team, building on each other's strengths and respecting differences; communicating concerns and troubleshooting challenges. They developed a strong work ethic – showing up every day from 8 am to 4 pm. – then participated in daily debriefings to discuss what worked and what needed improving for the next day. Most importantly, they served as role models for the other youth. At the Taste of the Islands, they inspired guests with presentations about their efforts to help build a new Vieques.

Many thanks

to Summer Institute sponsors and supporters!

Contributors: Diva's Closet, Bernard Hodes, David Gallim, DDK & Company LLP, Jade, Jardinería Tropical, M. Booth Associates, Catherine Mathis, Doug & Marikay McHoul, Tom & Maureen MacVitie, Rincón del Niño, Johanna Camacho &

Hector Ortiz, Ellen & Harry Parker, Elizabeth Pedersen, David Rudenstine, Rebecca Shahmoon Shanok, Oglá Silva, Susan & Harry Siegle, Zma Steingberg, the Totenberg Group, Twyla Tharp, Tom Wright, Girl Scouts of Tampa, FL, the Block Family Foundation, Littleford Foundation, Micro-soft Corporation and the Municipality of Vieques.

Transportation: Air Sunshine and JetBlue; **Hotels:** Bravo Beach Hotel, Martineau Bay Resort & Spa and Wind Chimes; **Restaurants:** Cafeteria Delicia, Café Ocean Blue, Doghouse Café, MBar, Mucho Gusto, Panaderia La Viequense, Pizzeria Copa de Oro, Richard's Café, Shaunias and Taverna Española; **Other In-Kind Sponsors:** Cayo Blanco, Comedores del Municipio, El Sombrero Viejo, Island Adventures, Diego Montoya, Professional Hair, Supermercado Morales, Tom's Vieques Flowers, Vieques Computer and Vieques Baby Center. **VYLI Faculty:** Emily Fletcher, The Mineshaft, Virgin Gorda, Norma Gonzales, Create, Portland, OR and Carmen Portella Weir; Llanell Rivera, Melissa Reyes, Maria Soler and Eliud Vasquez: Conservatory of Puerto Rico; Kalish Ortiz, Freddie Ortiz, Martineau Bay Resort & Spa and **Volunteers:** Chris Batista, Tara Calderbank, Freya & Richard Block, Ileana & Roberto Cacho, Benito Felix, Rosa Felix, Paul Lutton, Fe Mercedes, Nora Morales Rosa

Rich Exchange with Vieques and BVI Youth

Last March Josué Cruz invited BVI Chief Minister Orlando Smith to send BVI youth to the VYLI 3rd annual Summer Institute. As a youth delegate in the first Vieques-Tortola Economic – Cultural Exchange, Josue's goal is to create a partnership between teens in Vieques and the British Virgin Islands. Josué was pleased to meet Gerry Obert, the first BVI representative from Jost Van Dyke. 13-year-old Gerry was accompanied by Spanish-speaking Emily Fletcher, The Mineshaft in Virgin Gorda from Puerto Rican descent. At first Gerry was a little shy, but enjoyed the warm welcome from Vieques youth. Having bi-lingual Josué as his Camp Counselor helped Gerry to overcome language barriers and make friends. His natural curiosity and eagerness for cultural experiences helped guarantee a wonderful week-long training. Gerry quickly became an Ambassador for the BVI, sharing stories about his small island in the BVI archipelago, home to just 3, 000 people. He was surprised that most people in Vieques weren't familiar with Jost Van Dyke (JVD). He'd read that people from JVD had traveled to Vieques in the 1920's to work on the sugar plantations. Vieques reminded Gerry of his mother's homeland of Grenada during the day and Trinidad at night.

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Líderes de la juventud

FUTURO ABOGADO



• **Josué Cruz** (17, futuro abogado) Se ha convertido en un excelente orador, haciendo presentaciones bilingües en los eventos de la comunidad de Vieques como: la conferencia Alianza para Nueva Humanidad, Hotel El Convento, La Fortaleza y la Delegación de Vieques-Tortola Económico-Cultural. Gracias al apoyo de Hacienda Tamarindo, Josué ha viajado a California para recibir entrenamiento de radio en La Fundación de Cesar Chavez y Radio Campesina.

• **Kutasha Silva** (25, futura concertista de cello y jazz) es la coordinadora de proyectos, asiste al Conservatorio de Música de PR.

• **Ambar Fontanez** (18, 2do año de pre-médica) propuesta de prevención de embarazos en adolescentes.

• **José Padilla** (15, futuro actor) fue entrevistado en el Canal 30, San Juan TV.

• **Carmen Rosa** (13, futura cantante) grabó la canción tema de VYLI con Tito Auger y los jóvenes.

Trabajos para los graduados

- **Josué Cruz:** *Amapola Bilí*
- **Joshua Baez, Odalys Sampayo y Clara Gómez:** *Martineau Bay Resort & Spa*
- **Kassandra Castillo Cruz:** *Scoop Pizza*
- **Excel López:** *American Eagle*
- **José Nieves:** *Zonorus Sound System*
- **Michael Velázquez:** *Grupo Cacho, Inc.*

Becas Universitarias para los Graduados VYLI

2005: Marie Angeles, Jahtzmila Garino, Mercedes Bonano Pérez, Nelirys Sánchez, Marión Camacho.

2006: Josué Cruz, Carmian Cepedes, José Nieves, Odalys Sampayo, Eliasib Utreras, Zuleka Rodríguez, Denise Davis, Olga García, Marta Galloway, Laura Dorado, Clara Gómez, Joshua Baez.

Consejeros Fomentado Sueños

Através del año el programa después de clases, provee modelos positivos de liderazgo, poniendo en equipos a los graduados con estudiantes de escuela superior e intermedia. Los consejeros adultos les abren las puertas para ayudar a los jóvenes a realizar sus sueños. Los graduados de VYLI también trabajan en el Instituto de Campamento de Verano como consejeros.

FUTURE MODEL



• **Kassandra Castillo Cruz** (17, futura modelo) Auspiciada por la modelo Ileana Cambó. Sesión de foto por agencia de modelos Única. Participó del prestigioso evento Fashion Week en San Juan y es candidata al concurso de Miss Mundo a celebrarse en octubre.

Gracias a todos nuestros colaboradores: Chefs, Eva Bolivar; Mark Martin; computadoras: Carmen Palmer; Tito Pena, Barry Silva, Jim Starke; Taino culture crafts: Daniel Silva; newspaper: Juan Silva; video editing: Leslie Mason; architect Paul Lutton, artists Ernesto Pena, Geoff Armstrong y Eve Aspinwall de Casa Vieja.

Entrenando a nuestros líderes

Kutasha Silva, Betsy Ayala y Lynda Bayron Recibieron entrenamiento certificado con la Fundación Nacional de Enseñanza Empresarial en N.Y.

COSAS QUE NECESITAMOS

Computadora Mac (osx) para editar video, impresora, copiadora a color, scanner, instrumentos musicales, equipo de sonido, bocinas y micrófonos.