

# MENTAL HEALTH A MUST!

With a population of approximately 800,000 or less the issue of mental health in Guyana has mostly been dealt with from a reactionary standpoint. Thus, a revolutionary approach was taken to address mental health in Guyana, as the Jay and Sylvia Sobhraj Foundation will establish the Jay and Sylvia Sobhraj Centre for Behavioral Studies.



The Jay and Sylvia Sobhraj Foundation members - L-R Nardeo Singh, Sylvia Sobhraj, Jay Sobhraj, and Sravan Budhu.

At a cost of \$400,000 US, an existing building in the University of Guyana's Turkeyen Campus will be refurbished to create modern multipurpose centre. The donors, Mr and Mrs Sobhraj, Mr. Nardeo Singh, Mr Sravan Budhu and local Guyanese Businessman Neil Suklal want to make sure the environment is conducive for learning and healing.

Already dubbed a legacy building, the new research facility will complement the Mental Health Department which was established by the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) and also house the Psychology Programmes but will facilitate a bookstore, food court, model counselling centre, student gym, prayer rooms and an extended Medex Station.

In brief remarks founder, Jay Sobhraj said "I myself was fortunate to have a very good British education and it was made possible by grants and donations from various foundations... so today is one day I can say thank the dear lord I can share what I received from others with my

hometown." His wife Sylvia a registered Nurse trained in the UK, grew up in the village of Cove and John on the East Coast of Guyana. Jay and Sylvia are very humble and passionate about helping others, as such they formed The Jay and Sylvia Foundation.

For over a period of 10 years, the foundation in both Guyana and the USA and Zara Group of Companies, generously donated to the Guyana Police Force, Nongovernmental Organisations, and several schools in Guyana and the U.S. On



A Rendering drawing of The Jay and Sylvia Sobhraj Center for Behavioral Studies building

this trip, the group also used the occasion to donate a quantity of cricket gears to the University of Guyana sport Division and the Guyana Police Force. The donation included a quantity of helmets, pads, gloves, bats and balls, plus 20 desktop computers were donated to the Police Force. The value of this gift was over 3.8 million GY dollars.

At the launch of the The Jay and Sylvia Center for Behavioral Studies and Research, Deputy Vice-Chancellor Professor Paloma Mohamed highlighted to the media that this is the first major gift



UG Faculty and Team in meeting to design the Master, Bachelor and Diploma programs in Psychology

by a private individual or foundation to the University of Guyana.

Meanwhile, a Di-

rector of the Foundation, Mr. Nardeo Singh underscored the importance of mental health in Guyana. Singh said "life is nothing more



Cricket Gears handed over to Public security minister, Khemraj Ramjattan

than a mind's game... and what we are truly looking for is a solution that society has closed the door on the mentally challenged population and we together, the university, the faculty,

awareness, we are going to work together to get the solution and we will provide the help.... every life matters." Present at the signing

VC Griffith said "This is not only a signally important milestone along rebranding and rebuilding, but it testifies to our recognition of the essential purpose of our being to enhance the ability of our students to come in and get experience."

Envisage to fulfilling the needs on the Turkeyen campus, the multipurpose centre will aim to bring a positive impact to students and faculty staff. It was designed to include four soundproof lecture rooms, one state of the art smart class room and one smart class room, the upper flat of the multipurpose centre will adequately facilitate up to one hundred individuals. Also a staff room, board room and a behavioural and research studies centre.

While the lower flat will house a food court and lounge, campus and bookstore, an improved student gym and prayer rooms for the Christian, Hindu and Islamic student societies and lastly, a psychological teaching and counselling center.

## IMPACT OF THE JAY AND SYLVIA SOBHAJ CENTRE FOR BEHAVIORAL STUDIES

Pointing out that "Philanthropy requires cultivation and time"

UG'S Vice Chancellor Professor Ivelaw Griffith applauded the foundation for their generous and significant donation.

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# New York-based Jay and Sylvia Sobhraj Foundation Signs MOU with University of Guyana

## ADDRESSING THE PHENOMENON OF MENTAL HEALTH

As efforts intensify to improve mental health



UG Faculty of Psychology, Psychologists from the Caribbean Alliance of National Psychologists Association and Members of The Jay and Sylvia Sobhraj Foundation



LR - Sravan Budhu, Dr Paloma Martin, Nardeo Singh, Vice Chancellor Ivelaw Griffith, Jay Sobhraj, Commissioner of Police Seelall Persaud.

outcomes and reduce suicide deaths in Guyana, several factors may contribute to Guyana's inadequate approach to mental health. Some of these factors include:

**- Outdated Legislation**

Woefully outdated mental health legislation is at least eighty seven years old. Created in the 1930s, the legislation leaves little to no man-

agement in implementing or recreating resources to individuals who suffer with psychological issues.

**- Cultural Beliefs**

Guyana being a superstitious country, its citizens often views

mental illness as something due to "demon possession" and the unsettling reality of emotional distress is equivalent to weakness;

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was highlighted in recent reports that the number of psychiatric nurses

tures of the programme include the integration of mental health into

the suicide prevention plan has had significant challenges in implementing the goals and objectives.



LR - Sravan Budhu, Dr Paloma Martin, Nardeo Singh, Vice Chancellor Ivelaw Griffith, Jay Sobhraj, Commissioner of Police Seelall Persaud.

and social workers have increased slightly.

## IMPLEMENTATION OF ACTION PLANS

In 2015 the Government launched a five year National Mental Health Strategy. The fea-

primary care, a national suicide prevention initiative and the enhancement of related clinics across Guyana. Meanwhile, the national suicide prevention plan for 2015-2020 was also created, according to CALDERIA, 2016

community welcomes the construction of the Jay and Sylvia Sobhraj Centre for Behavioral Studies, as mental health in Guyana will now be seen as a priority rather than being placed on the backburner.

## The Jay and Sylvia Sobhraj Center for Behavioral Sciences and Research

A Philanthropic Gift

Investing in The University of Guyana and The Guyanese People



Signing of the MOU: L - R, Nardeo Singh, Dr Paloma Martin, Vice Chancellor, Jay Sobhraj