

ZARA Group and Guyana Police Force Celebrate 5 Years Partnership

To date over 10,000 received free computer training as Guyana moves to an oil and gas economy

Jay Sobhraj: "It is not what you have that matters, but what you do with what you have that matters"



2012- GPF Crime Chief - Asst Commissioner of police Seelall Persaud



Zara - SVP Jay Sobhraj



IT Consultant Naresh Singh



2012 - Commissioner of Police Leroy Brumell



The Zara TEAM - L to R, Naresh Singh, Sylvia Sobhraj, Jay Sobhraj and Sarwan Budhu



GPfZARA Computer CENTER #1 - Felix Austin Police College in Berbice County

The Zara Donor group based in Queens, New York, headed by Mr. Jay Sobhraj, SVP of Zara Group of Companies and his wife Ms. Sylvia Sobhraj, celebrated their five year old partnership with the Guyana Police Force.

The two, teamed up to provide free computer training to communities throughout Guyana. It was no surprise when Assistant Commissioner of Police, Ms. Maxine Graham, announced at one of the graduating classes, that during the five years, over 10,000 students including policemen and women, were trained at the three State of the Art Computer centers located in Berbice, Essequibo and Demerara, the three counties of Guyana. It goes to show that private public partnership can work providing that the partners have the same goal.

The partnership began in October 2011 with a five minute conversation between then GPF crime chief, Mr. Seelall Persaud, and one of the Zara Team member's, Information Technology (IT) consultant Naresh Singh. The discussion was based on a single question: how can we bring the Guyanese community and the Guyana Police force closer? At that time, the public perception of the Guyana Police force was not good.

The public opinion was that the police are corrupt and are not doing their jobs. As a result, there was an increase in crime throughout Guyana. Mr. Singh observed, while working on other humanitarian computer projects in Guyana, that there is a big gap between the community and the Guyana Police Force. He also noticed that there is a demand for computer training for the policemen and women, as well as the community at large. He said that Information Technology was transforming communities, economies and societies throughout the world, except Guyana. So, an Idea was born and a seed was planted. There and then he suggested to the Crime Chief, a partnership where Zara would build a state of the art computer center for GPF, provided the GPF will provide free computer

training to the communities. The thought process was based on the fact that the police will get computer trained, which they badly needed. The people in the communities will come into the police facilities for computer training thus bringing them closer to the police organization where a friendship can develop. A better and closer relationship between the Police and the community will help in reducing and preventing crime. Lastly, the technical knowledge received at the computer center will help to transform the Guyanese society into the Information Technology world. One would say, "It's a win win, win idea". Mr. Persaud who is currently the Commissioner of Police, and Mr. Singh brain stormed the idea further, both loving it and decided to bring it to fruition. Mr. Persaud spoke to his superior Mr. Leroy Brumell, then the Commissioner of Police and Mr. Singh spoke to his other partners, Mr and Mrs Jay Sobhraj and Mr. Sravan Budhu.

In June 2012, as Mr. Singh said, the first seed was planted. The GPfZARA Computer Center was opened to the public at Felix Austin Police College in the Berbice County of Guyana. The Zara Team collaborated with Mr. Seelall Persaud and his team to engineer the renovating of a classroom to be more fitted for a technology center and the installation and configuration of computers, computer servers, printers, networking and internet connectivity. The Zara Donor group funded the project and Mr. Singh provided training to the Police Computer Trainers, so they can then train others. Similar Technology centers, in addition to libraries, were opened, the second one in July 2013 at the Richard Faikal Police College at



Police Recruits in Training at GPfZARA Computer Center #1.



GPfZARA LIBRARY AT Richard Faikal Police College in the Essequibo County



GPfZARA Computer Sign.



Students in training at the GPfZARA Computer Center #2



Zara Computer Center at Herricks High School



Zara Computer Center at Center Street Elementary school



Opening of the GPfZARA Computer Center #2.



Students in training at the GPfZARA Computer Center #3



GPfZARA Computer #3 - Sign.



Students in training at the GPfZARA Computer Center #3



Happy: (l-r) George Subraj, Dr. Biewirth, Dr. Modoono, Sylvia Sobhraj, Nikhil Subraj, Vibha Subraj, Manisha Subraj, Tony Subraj and Ken Subraj at Herricks High School

the Suddie Village in the Essequibo County, and then in December of 2013, the third center was opened at the Officer Training Center in the Demerara County of Guyana. The idea was nicely planned, covering the three counties of Guyana. Finally, in March on this year, the Zara Group, seeing the need to help the police deal with the new crime wave, Cyber-crimes, decided to donate a GPfZARA Cyber Security Center. During the five years, the Zara group has been providing valuable technical training to the GPF staff and computer software and hardware maintenance support. Computers are upgraded or replaced in order to be current with today's technology.

The group also helped with the computer course planning and as time progresses, will add higher-level courses to the menu. Today, a student can start with a basic introduction to computer class and continue to more advance classes such as PC Repair and Maintenance and Computer Networking. Every year, in August, the ZARA team and GPF management comes together to be a part of the graduation ceremonies at the three centers where hundreds of students received their well-deserved certificates. At this time, the team also reviews the year's performances and plan the next year's goals and objectives.

For the 2017 -2018 period, the centers will offer classes in Adobe Photoshop, introduction to Computer Security, Introduction to Web design and a career development workshop. The computer Classes are free of cost to the Guyanese communities.

The funding cost of the partnership's projects to date is over five hundred thousand US dollars, which is provided by the Zara Donor Group and the costs still growing. However, the future value of the partnership is what matters the most. It's invaluable, when you think of over 10,000 students trained to date, and the contributions they will make to their communities, to the economy and lastly the bonding of the people and the police. During the

five years, many have seen a change in the public attitude towards the Guyana Police Force in a good way. Even some students who received computer training at the center joined the police force. Some obtained jobs in Information Technology, while others stay in contact with the GPfZARA Computer Centers trainers.

With the Advent of an oil and natural gas economy soon to take shape in Guyana, there will be a high demand for computer literate workers.

The ZARA, GPF Team is very confident that sooner than later the seed which was planted with the opening of the first computer center will bear fruit and at the same time fulfilling the plan or idea that was born out of a five minute discussion between two people from different professions. This idea will certainly continue to help in transforming the Guyanese communities and economy to a digital one while bringing the GPF and the communities closer.

The Zara Donor Group, in particular JaySobhraj and his Wife Sylvi-aSobhraj, Mr. Sarwan-Budhu, IT consultant Mr. Naresh Singh and the Guyana Police Force, will go down in history as great contributors to the development Guyana in the area of Information Technology.

Mr Jay Sobhraj concluded in one of his speeches to the graduating class, "It is not what you have that matters, but what you do with what you have that matters". Well for sure the group has used what they have to make a very noble and visionary contribution to the Guyanese societies.

Apart from the communities in Guyana, they have also done similar work with school communities in Nassua Country, New York, at Herrick Middle and High Schools, the Richmond Hill High School in Richmond Hill Queens, NY and at the American Sevashram in Jamaica Queens, New York. Altogether, the Zara Donor Group has established 14 State of the Art Computer centers, nine in Guyana and five in New York.



GPfZARA Computer CENTER #2 Richard Faikal Police College in Essequibo County



GPfZARA Computer Center #3, Georgetown



GPfZARA Cyber Security Center in Georgetown Demerara County.



Zara Computer Center at the Central Islamic Organization of Guyana (CIOG)



Zara Computer Center at the Cove and John Ashram - Hindu College Students



ZARA Computer Center at Richmond Hill High School In Queens, New York.