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PwC assists Key Leader weekend

05 October, 2011

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Kiwanis President Elect Kadi Merren, centre, with John Gray High School student and Key Club member Kelsie Bodden, left, and Key Club Lieutenant Governor Diana Tibbetts. – Photo: Submitted

Cayman's teenagers are getting the opportunity to learn vital leadership skills thanks to financial assistance from sponsors from the business community.

Accounting and advisory firm PricewaterhouseCoopers is one such contributor to the Kiwanis annual Key Leader event in a bid to ensure this programme continues.

Kiwanis President Elect Kadi Merren, who also works at PwC as an advisory senior, said the donation is an investment in Cayman's future.

"Kiwanis will be staging our fifth annual Leadership event from 21-23 October, at St. Ignatius School, targeting 15- to 18-year-olds across the Island and offering them the opportunity to develop skills necessary to become tomorrow's valued personnel and future executives," Ms Merren said.

The leadership programme is limited to about 60 young people each year who have all demonstrated an eagerness to participate and who are hard workers at their school (confirmation of good standing is required from their teachers). Kiwanis members ensure the young participants are all guided while on the programme to help them fully appreciate everything they learn. The youngsters are required to each pay a fee of C\$25 in order to show commitment, with the remaining costs (at about C\$150 per participant) funded through donations, such as PwC's. These funds cover the cost of an American facilitator brought in for the Key Leader event, as well as other costs including programme materials, activities and food.

Ms Merren said the benefits of the Key Leader programme are understood worldwide and the programme has been held in a number of countries including the US, Canada, Malaysia, and Brazil. She said young people get the chance to learn the most important lesson of service leadership: That leadership comes from helping others succeed.

"Participants also learn to understand the five main life goals that any potential leader should be aspiring towards," she said. "These are personal integrity, personal growth, respect for yourself and others, building community and the pursuit of excellence."

Diana Tibbetts, 17, is studying social studies at the University College of the Cayman Islands and is lieutenant governor for all Key Clubs on Island. She is a student facilitator for this year's Key Leader weekend and attended last year's event.

"It really changed my life for the better," she said. "I am a different person because of the Key Leadership programme. I believe I'm a better listener and can appreciate different people's perspectives."

Kelsie Bodden, 15, is a year 11 student at John Gray High School and is a Key Club member. She is looking forward to this year's event, also having enjoyed the programme last year.

"It was a great way to make new friends from different schools," she said. "In particular the programme taught me the importance of being conscious of your public image and how to present yourself well."

Ms Merren has embarked on a road show around the high schools in Cayman to showcase the event, confirming the programme is open to all interested young people, not just Key Club members. There is a limit as to how many young people can be accommodated.

She said the Key Leader programme works because it takes young people out of their comfort zone and pushes them to think about the crucial aspects of what makes a good

leader.

"It really is an incredible experience for the young people," Ms Merren said.

PwC's Territory Senior Partner, Frazer Lindsay, said the firm is delighted to be able to contribute to such a cause: "It is our belief that there has never been as important a time to assist with the development of Cayman's youth," he said. "The Key Leader programme teaches Cayman's young people some important values that will not only stand them in good stead for their future careers, but also within the wider context of their lives in general. We applaud Kadi and all the Kiwanis members for introducing this programme and wish it continued success."

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