

# PAPAYO!

The Quarterly Newsletter of the SVG Hotel & Tourism Association

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VOL. 11 ISSUE 1

## OUR NEW PRESIDENT, ISOLA GIDDINGS, SPEAKS



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It is with great pleasure that I accept this prestigious position of President for the St. Vincent & the Grenadines Hotel and Tourism Association for the years 2024/2025.

I am elated to embark on new initiatives to establish further growth and development of our people. The task may be enormous, however, with the collective efforts and support of my board members along with our stakeholders, I am confident that we shall grow from strength to strength within this fast growing, dynamic hospitality and tourism sector.

It is my belief that to boost our beautiful islands and cays, we need to carry out the following tasks:

- 1) To have continuous training of our staff, thus providing the necessary tools to carry out the tasks required and equipping the employees with the support to further improve the quality of professional development.
- 2) Identifying key revenue earning opportunities by capitalizing on profitable niche markets such as eco-tourism, sports tourism, destination weddings, diving destination tourism, just to name a few.
- 3) Set standards to enhance and promote sustainable economic development.
- 4) Ensuring standards are set for all board members of the SVGHTA, and further encouraging other hospitality and customer service businesses to join the association.

Therefore, we call on the various Government Ministries and agencies working with the association to collaborate and promote our beautiful Hairouna, thus making St. Vincent & the Grenadines the "Caribbean You're Looking For".

**NEXT GENERAL MEETING  
MAY - DATE WILL BE COMMUNICATED**

# Recognizing Excellence in 2023

From time to time mention is made of “Unsung Heroes”. It does not matter the field of work, country, profession, the term is often bandied about – sometimes amidst great fanfare. Too many times we fail to pay homage to individuals and organizations that make a difference in everyday life.

In an effort to ‘turn the tide’, some years ago, the Department of Tourism introduced an Annual Awards Celebration Programme. Despite a number of hiccups (including missed years), today the Ministry of Tourism, in collaboration with the Tourism Authority, and the Hotel and Tourism Association, has made the Annual Tourism Awards Cocktails and Ceremony a date when full recognition is given to some of the many unsung heroes in the Saint Vincent and the Grenadines Tourism and Hospitality Sector.

On the evening of November 25th 2023, at the newly renovated, expanded and picturesque LaVue Hotel, the SVG Hotel and Tourism Association joined forces with the Ministry of Tourism and the Tourism Authority in honouring some of those unsung heroes.

The Hotel and Tourism Association is pleased to publicly recognize the 2023 Awardees, while at the same time, expressing its thanks to the businesses that continue to support the Association’s efforts in Recognizing Excellence.



**BARTENDER OF THE YEAR  
JOEL JACK  
Paradise Beach Hotel  
Sponsor:  
East Caribbean Group of  
Companies**



**CHEF OF THE YEAR  
KAREN ASHTON  
Grenadine House  
Sponsor:  
East Caribbean Group of  
Companies**



**DIVE OPERATOR OF THE YEAR  
VAUGHN MARTIN  
Serenity Dive  
Sponsor:  
St Vincent Cooperative Bank Ltd**



**FRONT OFFICE PERSON OF  
THE YEAR  
ETHLYN JOHN  
Mandarin Oriental  
Sponsor:  
St Vincent Cooperative Bank Ltd**



**GARDENER OF THE YEAR  
NEWTON GEORGE  
Grenadine House  
Sponsor:  
QuickCash Corporation Ltd**



**HOTEL OPERATOR OF THE  
YEAR  
ISOLA GIDDINGS  
Grenadine House  
Sponsor:  
Massy Stores (SVG) Ltd**

# Recognizing Excellence in 2023



**ISLAND AMBASSADOR OF THE YEAR**  
**MELISSA SOLOMON**  
Mandarin Oriental  
Sponsor:  
GECCU



**ROOM ATTENDANT OF THE YEAR**  
**ALMA RICHARDS**  
Young Island Resort  
Sponsor:  
Coreas Distribution Ltd



**SUPERVISOR OF THE YEAR**  
**MICHAEL JOSEPH**  
Beachcombers Hotel  
Sponsor:  
Sagicor Life Inc



**WAITRESS OF THE YEAR**  
**PATRICIA CONLIFFE**  
Young Island Resort  
Sponsor:  
East Caribbean Group of  
Companies



**YACHT OPERATOR OF THE YEAR**  
**PHILLIP BARNARD**  
Accepted by Thor Magnus  
Sponsor:  
QuickCash Corporation Ltd



# KNOW YOUR INSURANCE BENEFITS

**T**he St. Vincent and the Grenadines Hotel and Tourism Association Inc. (SVGHTA) offers a Group Life & Health plan for both their allied and non-allied members. This plan comprises three tiers Earth, Sky and Sun and all tiers have the Preventative benefit.

There is an alarming increase of cases in St. Vincent and the Grenadines with persons who have chronic non-communicable diseases (NCD's). It is important for persons to have their regular/annual check-ups, screening, eat healthy, exercise and eliminate stress.

## **Did you know the preventive care benefit is not subject to annual deductibles nor co-insurance?**

Preventative Care Benefit:

Annual Maximum - Employees

Annual Maximum - Spouses

Annual Maximum – Immunization for each dependent child under age 5

Annual Physical Examination Benefit for Employees & Spouses, including

a) Blood Pressure Check

b) Respiratory Check

c) Complete Urinalysis

d) Blood Profile, including

i. Fasting Blood Sugar

ii. Complete Blood Count

iii Total Cholesterol Check

iv. Haemoglobin

v. Estimated Sedimentation Rate (ESR) Test

e) Annual Gynaecological and Pap Smear test for each female employee or spouse of a male employer

Annual Mammogram for each female employee or spouse of a male employee age 35 and over

Annual Proctology/Prostate inclusive of PSA Test Examination for each male employee or spouse of a female employee aged 35 and over.

Annual Glaucoma Test for employees and spouses.

General Insurance

## **Did you know that Lynch Caribbean Brokers (SVG) Ltd can assist you with getting the Best Quote for your Home Insurance?**

At Lynch Caribbean Brokers, we seek the best rates in the insurance market for your most valuable asset: Your Home.

We also seek additional policy coverages which include:

Public Liability

Personal Liability

Employers Liability

Contents in transit

Loss of metered water

Removal of any uninsured &/or fallen trees

Replacement of Door Locks following theft of keys

# SVG WELCOMES SANDALS RESORT



Sandals Saint Vincent and the Grenadines opened its doors Wednesday 27th March 2024, welcoming its first guests to a nature-forward resorts brimming with island inspiration and stirring ‘Sandals Firsts.’ The opening marks Sandals Resorts’ long-awaited introduction to the largely undiscovered Eastern Caribbean destination.



## OPINION PAGE—DEVELOPING YEAR-ROUND TOURISM

I remember when I was a child, the term ‘Tourist Season’ referred to that time of year when the cruise ships (or tourist boats as they were then called) visited our country. This later progressed to more stay over visitors with the opening of independent tourist accommodation such as Miss Paynter’s Guest House, Blue Caribbean Hotel, Blue Lagoon Hotel, the South Bridge Hotel, to name a few. In those halcyon days, visitors to the region (including St Vincent) came mainly to escape the cold winter months in the USA and Britain.

A number of things resulted from this, the most significant probably being the development of a short ‘winter’ tourist ‘season’, and the resultant need to make whatever profit you could during that short period of time. The Caribbean region became known primarily as a winter destination for wealthy tourists who could afford to escape the rigors of the winter months. Some of the region’s visitors owned vacation retreats that tended to employ primarily housekeepers, butlers, cooks, maids, chauffeurs and gardeners. This employment trend certainly contributed to the perception that the tourism industry was strictly an employer of low-end workers who served their Caucasian masters and mistresses.

As time progressed and more enlightened thinkers entered the tourism fray, efforts began to be made to extend the tourist ‘season’. (There’s that pesky word again!) Even though those efforts were being made to extend the period when visitors came to the Caribbean, we just couldn’t seem to be able to rid ourselves of that word. However, under the tutelage of perhaps one of the region’s most dynamic and visionary tourism leaders, the late Audrey Palmer-Hawkes, the Caribbean embarked on a campaign to create year-round tourism in the Caribbean, including an extremely success Public Relations Campaign under the theme—”The Season of Sweet Savings”.

Since then, many Caribbean countries have successfully turned around that short ‘winter tourist season’ and are now welcoming many visitors from many parts of the world throughout the year. Here in St Vincent and the Grenadines (until the recent onslaught of high regional airfares and later the demise of LIAT) we experienced peaks of visitations during the Easter period and the June/July Carnival months mainly from Caribbean visitors. But by and large, many of those visitors tended not to stay in traditional accommodation.

Those two peak periods outside the traditional December to April period did not occur because of deliberate action on the part of the local tourism industry. They appeared to be natural developments that occurred as a result of the Caribbean people’s love of travel and effective ‘word-of-mouth’ advertisements. But the time for deliberate and carefully planned action for luring visitors to visit St Vincent and the Grenadines and to utilize the various types of tourist accommodation is long overdue. We need to sit down and work together, first of all, to determine why we do not have ‘year-round tourism’. And we must avoid at all costs making assumptions. We must undertake appropriate research (primary and secondary) to determine why the situations is the way it is. Who are the people who tend to travel during this period and what are they looking for. How do we match up to those requirements? What are the existing negatives? What do we have presently that could be used to attract the identified markets? Are we price-competitive? When visitors come to our shores do we have enough organized and attractively priced quality attractions and tours? Are we prepared to welcome visitors from non-traditional markets? Do we need to develop unique packages? What kind of marketing strategies do we need to develop and finance? Do we work together enough? And do we give our investments enough time to begin making a decent profit? In other words, do we expect instant, overnight success?

It is not easy now, and it is going to continue to be difficult for us to build ‘year-round-tourism’. But with careful and deliberate research and planning, and of course, recognizing that our own people are a potential source of year-round tourism, we can develop an industry that is built on the premise that a good product that places quality at the centre, and targets the appropriate markets in a consistent manner, always listening to the customer and ensuring that benefits accrue to all concerned—owners/managers, workers, residents, and of course the users of the product (international, regional and domestic visitors), we can indeed create successful year-round tourism.

# SVG-HTA WELCOMES NEW MEMBERS

## ***Gate 3 Restaurant & Lounge***

The Joshua Center, Arnos Vale  
(784) 570-3333  
Email: [gate3restaurant@gmail.com](mailto:gate3restaurant@gmail.com)  
Web: [www.gate3restaurant.com](http://www.gate3restaurant.com)



## ***Jack's Beach Bar***

Bequia  
Tel: 784 83809  
Email: [info@jacksbeachbar.com](mailto:info@jacksbeachbar.com)  
Web: [jacksbeachbar.com](http://jacksbeachbar.com)



## **MOONSHINE RESTAURANT AND BAR**

Villa  
Email: [moonshine.svg1@gmail.com](mailto:moonshine.svg1@gmail.com)  
Tel: (784) 431-9741



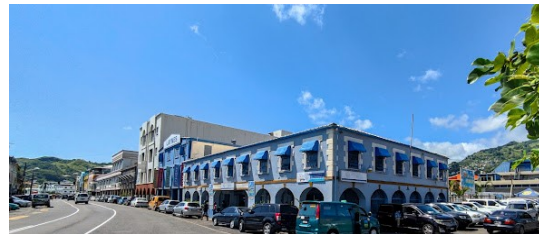
## **Myah's Hotel**

Windward Highway, Diamond  
Tel: 784 451 3600  
[reservation@myahshotel.com](mailto:reservation@myahshotel.com)  
<https://myahshotel.com/>



## ***ST. VINCENT COOPERATIVE BANK LIMITED***

Kingstown  
784) 456-1894  
[info@svcooperativebank.com](mailto:info@svcooperativebank.com)  
<http://www.svcooperativebank.com>



## FEATURED MEMBER

### VEE JAYS RESTAURANT—A CULINARY JOURNEY THROUGH GENERATIONS



#### **D**iscover why Vee Jay's is a True Taste of St. Vincent and the Grenadines

In the heart of Kingstown, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, there's a culinary gem that has stood the test of time, offering a taste of Vincentian flavors with a side of warm hospitality. Vee Jay's Restaurant and Bar, founded on November 30th, 1977, by Miss Veronica John, has become a cherished institution over the years, evolving from a humble cookshop to a multi-location dining experience that captures the essence of Vincentian cuisine.

#### **A Humble Beginning**

The journey began in 1977 when Miss Veronica John opened the doors of Vee Jay's, a cozy cookshop and snackette tucked away on Paul's Avenue, Kingstown. With a team of three dedicated individuals, including her niece, son, and daughter, Miss Veronica crafted a menu that resonated with the locals. Rotis, pelau, and a variety of meat lunches became instant favorites, accompanied by the beloved hot banana and coconut bread on Saturdays. The menu also featured refreshing drinks like Mauby and Peanut punch, setting the foundation for Vee Jay's culinary legacy. In its early days, Vee Jay's welcomed patrons to a warm and intimate space with a seating capacity of just 12 people. The restaurant operated from 10 am to 6 pm, creating a haven where locals could savor the authentic flavors of Vincentian cuisine.

#### **Evolution Over the Years**

As the years passed, Vee Jay's underwent significant transformations, adapting to changing times while staying true to its roots.



**Relocation and Expansion (1984):** The restaurant faced a pivotal moment when renovations prompted a move. Undeterred, Miss Veronica found a new location on Lower Bay Street, overcoming challenges and creating a welcoming space. In 1992, Vee Jay's Rooftop emerged, offering a different dining experience. In 2002, Vee Jay's Prime Lime opened near the E.T. Joshua Airport, creating a trifecta of culinary excellence.

**Expanded Menu and Services:** From the cookshop's counter service, Vee Jay's expanded to offer table service at the downtown location and a la carte service at the rooftop. Catering services blossomed, catering to events ranging from medical associations to corporate dinners. Today, the menu boasts a diverse range of dishes, from Vincentian specialties to international flavors, and the catering services have evolved to include modern events such as carnival bands and house parties.

**Increased Capacity and Operating Hours:** Over the years, the seating capacity has grown to accommodate 150 people in the downtown location's courtyard, air-conditioned dining room, and fresh air balcony. Operating hours have extended to 9 am to 10 pm, Monday to Saturday.



**Fond Memories:** Vee Jay's has become synonymous with unforgettable moments, from the Karaoke Star Search to J'Ouvert Morning Breakfast and catering for renowned events such as Adonal Foyle's basketball summer camp and various Mas Band festivities. Annual staff picnics and the celebration of milestones like the APOTHIC award have created a tapestry of cherished memories.

#### **Vee Jay's Restaurant and Bar Today: A Culinary Extravaganza**

Today Vee Jay's is a testament to culinary excellence, offering a rich tapestry of flavors that showcase the best of Vincentian cuisine. With a menu that changes daily, including a buffet with a variety of meats and creole-inspired dishes, Vee Jay's continues to push boundaries while staying rooted in tradition. The downtown location's courtyard, air-conditioned dining room, and fresh air balcony provide a comfortable and inviting space for

patrons to indulge in a culinary journey.

Whether you're a local looking to savour the tastes of home or a visitor seeking an authentic Vincentian experience, Vee Jay's is the ultimate destination. With over 150 cocktails from around the world and a commitment to catering that extends to modern events, Vee Jay's remains a dynamic force in the culinary landscape of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Step into Vee Jay's and embark on a culinary odyssey that spans generations, where each dish tells a story, and each visit creates a new memory.



## NEW SVG-HTA BOARD OF DIRECTORS ELECTED



From Left to Right: Vaughn Martin, Efe Gurol, Isola Giddings, Kim Halbich, Nichole Gun Munro, Bianca Porter, Kahlil Bacchus

Missing: Batu Erem, Philip Barnard and Keisha Browne

## THANK YOU, KIM

Nothing lasts forever. But it seems as if we have been reaping the benefits of a Kim Halbich Presidency for many years. Kim has served as President of the SVG-HTA on many different occasions. But perhaps the most difficult, significant and trying times were her last years serving as President. From 2019, SVG, and indeed the entire world went into a tail spin with the onslaught of the devastating and debilitating pandemic—COVID. Even with the much welcomed assistance from the Government, the entire industry experienced extremely trying times. Not to be outdone, our majestic lady in the north decided to remind everyone of her existence. The volcano, La Soufriere began to spill her guts, adding to the already extremely trying times facing the entire country. Storms, viruses and other pesky interventions added fuel to the already dangerous fires.

Throughout all of this, Kim continued to work closely with government officials and other relevant agencies, with the Secretariat and Board members in an effort to keep the industry to do more than just survive. Many of us took these actions for granted. But it would indeed be remiss of this publication to not say a big thank-you to Kim. Your hard work has not gone unnoticed. THANK YOU!



# PASSAGES



**M**ARTIN BARNARD, prominent businessman and Chairman of SVG Air passed away on Tuesday December 12th 2023. Prime Minister Gonsalves said Barnard has had a very distinguished career and was a fantastic patriot who made an immense contribution to St. Vincent and the Grenadines. He noted that Barnard was a man of calm, patience, peace, love and caring. The President, members and staff of the SVG Hotel and Tourism Association extend sincere condolences to his family.

**O**n January 4, 2024, diver and pilot **BOB SACHS'** single-engine plane took off from Bequia and crashed into the sea with no survivors. Bob came from New Jersey over 40 years ago as a diver. Bob trained a number of persons to dive. Chris Doyle wrote that he was generous and had no trace of meanness or vindictiveness. He lacked social inhibitions and would talk to anyone, pulling many into his orbit. He added that Bob and Bill Tewes were responsible for making St. Vincent and the Grenadines a diving destination. The President, members and staff of the SVG Hotel and Tourism Association extend sincere condolences to his family.



**T**ERRON FREDERICK TANNIS JR., died on Saturday 30th December, 2023 at the age of 54. Terron's tourism experience spanned many establishments in SVG including Cotton House Hotel, Palm Island Resort, Friendship Bay Hotel, Jack's Bar & the Devil's Table. A devoted husband and father, and a qualified accountant, Terrance's loss will be long felt. The SVG-HTA extends sincere condolences to his family.

# Thank You!

“Great things in business are never done by one person. They’re done by a team of people.” Steve Jobs. It is in recognition of this truism that the SVGHTA takes this opportunity to first thank all of our sponsors who so readily agreed to be involved in our Recognition of Excellence 2023 event.

- Coreas Distribution Ltd (Room Attendant of the Year)
- East Caribbean Group Of Companies (Bartender; Chef; Waitress)
- GECCU (Island Ambassador)
- Massy Stores (SVG) Ltd (Hotelier of the Year)
- QuickCash Corporation (Yacht Operator; Gardener)
- Sagicor Life Inc (Supervisor of the Year)
- St Vincent Cooperative Bank Ltd (Front Desk Person of the Year; Dive Operator of the Year)

**The St Vincent & the Grenadines Hotel & Tourism Association owes you all a debt of gratitude.**

Throughout the year, the SVGHTA has called on a number of entities for support. On very few occasions have we been turned away. To all of you, we say a heartfelt thank you, and we look forward to the maintenance of good relations in 2024 and beyond.

- *All Island Recycling Inc*
- *Beachcombers Hotel*
- *Bickles*
- *Blue Lagoon Hotel and Marina*
- *Cobblestone Inn*
- *Flow*
- *Grenadine House*
- *Hillside Apartments*
- *Hotel Alexandrina*
- *Mariners Hotel/French Verandah*
- *Ministry of Tourism, Civil Aviation, Sustainable Development & Culture*
- *Paradise Beach Hotel*
- *Serenity Dive*
- *Sunset Shores Beach Hotel*
- *St Vincent Brewery*
- *Tourism Authority*
- *Young Island Resort*

**SEND YOUR COMMENTS & SUGGESTIONS TO:  
[info@svghotels.com](mailto:info@svghotels.com)**

January—March, 2024

## SVG HOTEL & TOURISM ASSOCIATION

The St. Vincent & the Grenadines Hotel and Tourism Association is a non-profit organization registered under the Companies Act of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. It was first established in 1968 as the St. Vincent Hotel Association but was expanded in 1999 to encompass the entire tourism sector, hence its present designation. The main areas of focus of the Association are Training and Human Resource Development, Advocacy, Product Development, and Marketing and Promotion.

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