

SVGAT SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS COMMENTS

In the 2014 issue of the St. Vincent and Grenadines Association's Independence Anniversary magazine we provided comments made by recipients of bursaries over the years. Due to the limited space allowed for the magazine we could not publish all that was written.

Please find here the full version of what each student said about their receiving the bursary from the Association.

Keisha Carrington was the first recipient in the program in 2005. She received the Western Union Financial Services bursary. At that time she was attending the University of Toronto and enrolled in the Life Sciences program from which she graduated with a Bachelor of Science (Hons.) in 2009. Lisa currently works at a Project Analyst in health care at the University Health Network.

Taisha Lewis received a bursary in 2006 and wrote: "I obtained my Bachelor of Honours Arts & Science from McMaster University in 2010 and went on to obtain my Juris Doctorate from the University of Ottawa in 2013. During law school, I was Co-President of the Ottawa Chapter of the Black Law Students' Association and Chair of the Black Law Students' Association of Canada Executive Committee. I was called to the Ontario Bar in June 2014 and I'm currently enjoying private practice at a business law firm in Ottawa called LaBarge Weinstein LLP.

Advice to our youth:

1. Education is key! No matter what field, I think every young person should consider attending college or university and then follow through with a degree or diploma. There is much to be gained from pursuing higher education, in terms of personal growth, lifelong friendships and knowledge. No time is ever wasted on education. It is the key to leading the life you want to live.

2. Get involved in the community. Whether at school, at church, at work, or with an organization, being a part of extra-curricular groups is great for meeting new people, building confidence and most importantly, giving back to a community that likely helped you to get to where you are today. Volunteer, join a committee, form a group. There are many ways to be more than just a citizen and to be someone who is really immersed in his or her community. I became a member of the St. Vincent and the Grenadines Association of Ottawa and sit on the executive committee in the position of Secretary as a way of giving back to the community.

3. Don't be shy! Reach out to people that inspire you. They would love to hear from you and find out how they can help you grow - personally, professionally or spiritually. Often, young people can feel like those they look up to do not have time for them. This cannot be further from the truth. In my experience, established individuals are eager to help and mentor young people. It gives them a sense of fulfillment since they likely had someone help them when they were starting out. If you are interested in engineering, find an engineer to talk to. If you want to start your own business, find an entrepreneur and pick his or her brain. If you are considering developing the next big app, track down a developer and ask to meet for coffee. Speak up and get your questions answered. It will be the next step on your journey to fulfilling your dreams.

Jamile Garraway received the bursary in 2006 while attending D'Youville College in Buffalo, NY. He was pursuing a major in American History with a minor in Political Science while also

studying to become a teacher. “A combination of hard work, dedication, and perseverance allowed me to graduate Magna Cum Laude in 2008. Having experienced a great deal of academic success, I expected the transition to the workforce to be a smooth one.

My passion has always been to teach. Unfortunately for me, when I graduated jobs were scarce, so I had to find a way to make a difference in the lives of youth in a capacity outside of the classroom. After working a variety of different jobs that involved various levels of youth engagement and mentorship, I was fortunate to secure a position with the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) in 2010.

I have since had the pleasure to work in some of the cities neediest and most underserved neighborhoods helping students to recognize, and to realize, their potential. My formative experiences with the SVGAT helped me to see how culture can be used as a tool to educate, entertain, and to motivate young people.

I'm very honored to be in such esteemed company along with the other bursary winners. Each year we hear of the exploits of young Vincentians doing wonderful things both academically and in their respective communities.”

Kenisha Bynoe received her bursary in 2008 while she was a student at the University of Windsor enrolled in the Bachelor of Education program from which I graduated with honours. I also later graduated from the University of Toronto with a Masters in Education degree and am currently employed with a Toronto District School Board as a French Kindergarden Teacher.

Alyson Sandy wrote, “I was a recipient of the St. Vincent and the Grenadines Association of Toronto Inc. bursary in 2008 when I was enrolled at the University of Toronto in the Life Sciences program. More specifically, I majored in human biology, while minoring in physiology and sociology. In 2012, I successfully completed the program and graduated with an Honors Bachelor of Science degree. In the following year, I took a short break from academics to give back to my community. I volunteered at the CIBC Breast Centre at St. Michael's Hospital which was a very fulfilling experience. Shortly after, I decided that I wanted to further my education and involve myself in a professional program where I would gain specialized skills. This is when I applied to The Michener Institute for Applied Health Sciences where I am currently enrolled in my 2nd year in the medical laboratory science program. My plans for the future are to graduate and receive a license to practice as a medical laboratory technologist (MLT). My first year in this program has been challenging yet rewarding, and I look forward to having another successful school year.

I am extremely grateful to have received the bursary from the SVGAT as it has allowed me to proceed through my journey over the past few years. This bursary helps young individuals as myself to make a positive impact on the community, and it encourages youth to explore the endless possibilities of higher education. It is very important to provide young individuals with a stepping stone towards a bright future and this is exactly what the SVGAT bursary does. Once again, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the SVGAT and its contributions to community. Thank you!”

Hasani Vendryes was a student at the University of Toronto when he received his bursary in 2009 and has since graduated with an Honours Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and Historical

Studies. Hasani states “however, I am currently about to complete a social work volunteer placement as a counselor at an organization called Spectra. I have been volunteering with Spectra for nearly a year now. I plan to use Spectra, as a reference, and the skills and experience I have gained at Spectra, to gain employment in youth counseling or addictions counseling.

At the moment I wouldn't say that I am "gainfully" employed. I currently work part-time at a department store. This is temporary, as I hope to gain employment in a field relating to my volunteer placement soon.

I once helped to host one of the events of the Association.”

Victor Bibby

First off I would once again like to thank the St. Vincent and The Grenadines Association of Toronto for assisting me in pursuing a post secondary education. The bursary that I received from your organization in 2009 went a long way in my university success. Your bursary allowed for me to get a start on what is now an accomplished and successful goal.

From four years of hard work and determination I was able to receive a honours bachelor degree in sports management from Brock University. The knowledge and experience gained from my program led me to working with major sporting organizations such as the Toronto Argonauts, Ontario Coaches Association and Honda Indy. Using all of this experience gained I decided to create and start my own event production and media company by the name of MDR (Making Dreams Reality). Myself along with my two other partners founded this company to embrace and promote an urban culture that we feel is being misrepresented for the youth of our generation. Our mission is to create safe and innovative events in communities that showcases the urban culture in ways we can be proud of.

I do plan on returning to school to gain my masters in business administration and also have aspirations of receiving my diploma in radio broadcasting.

I am interested in becoming a member of the St. Vincent and Grenadines Association of Toronto because I believe it is important for the younger generation whose families come from a St. Vincent background be involved in the continued success and growth of the organization.

I would be more than honoured to share my experience and accomplishments in a forum. As for employment I am currently employed as a Manager for Boston Pizza Grimsby and operating my company full time.

My name is **Samantha Lewis** and I received my bursary in 2009 while I was attending my first year at Carleton University in Ottawa, Ontario. I graduated from Carleton University with a Bachelor of Science degree in Biochemistry. Currently, I am enrolled at York University pursuing a degree in English and will graduate this academic year, 2015 with the intention of being a professor.

Malik Morgan-John received his bursary in 2010 while attending Ryerson University where he continues his studies and plans to graduate in 2016/2017 with a Bachelors in Chemical Engineering.

“As part of my undergraduate program I have been able to gain work experience in a number of different fields including human resource, chemical, logistics, and waste management which allowed me to gain and improve a number of skills and quality traits. Throughout my years in University I have also joined a number of clubs and committees such the National Society of Black Engineers and Ryerson’s Tri-Mentoring Program. Through a joint effort between Tri-Mentoring Program and the Faculty of Engineering Department at my school, I was appointed Lead Mentor and asked to tutor 150-200 First Year Engineer students in the Calculus I course. I am grateful for receiving the scholarship and appreciate the St. Vincent and the Grenadines providing me and other aspiring scholars the opportunity to further our studies.”

Andrea Providence was one of three recipients in 2010 and at the time was attending Ross University School of Medicine and hopes to graduate as a medical doctor in May 2015. “Currently I am in application season for Residency and my schedule is quite tight. I would be happy to write a few paragraphs after my graduation discussing how I got to that point for the benefit of younger students.”

Jamaal Exeter received his bursary in 2012 and graduated in April 2014 in the field of Human Kinetics/Kinesiology from the University of Ottawa. “I am extremely grateful to the St. Vincent and the Grenadines Association for the assistance provided to me.”

Advice for the younger students: After graduating from my program I was able to quickly find a job within my field of study as a Kinesiologist/Nutritionist. My advice for younger students is to stay in school for as long as you can. Not only do you learn educational lessons and receive professional experience but there are also so many other beneficial things come along with being enrolled in a post-secondary program. The key difference between secondary and post-secondary education is the absolute independence that you have. Your success is completely dependent upon you. Knowing that there are no longer professors that care whether or not you do your assignments. They will not offer you a make-up exam or have any pity for you. You are simply another student that is paying your tuition and a number in the universities’ system. This may sound scary but it is an experience that really matures you. It helps you to develop the life-skills to be successful in the job force and overall in life. Having a degree or diploma on the wall is essentially what employers are looking for now. They want to see that you have been committed to an area of expertise and can learn and function independently and a part of a team. This is applicable to university because you need to be able to study for exams and write them on your own but you will have group projects and study group that you also have to be a part of. Besides the educational aspect of school, it is a time to network yourself and really have fun.

Lemuel Stephens wrote: “During my 2013/2014 postsecondary studies, the SVGAT awarded me a bursary to help with my school expenses. I was attending Centennial College, Progress campus, when I received the bursary and still am to this date. I was taking Biomedical Engineering, but decided to change programs before entering my third year, due to a bad job outlook for my program choice. I am now taking Mechanical Engineering. Since I was able to transfer majority of my courses into my new program, I intend to graduate, in the next year or year and a half.

My college experiences have been quite easy so far, in terms of academics, having attending the top school for boys in my home country, the St. Vincent Boys Grammar School. Having had strict teachers, that taught me to focus more on academics instead of various social activities, it was quite easy to adjust to the academic side of college life without being sidetracked by things like parties and

such. I would say, building relationships with fellow classmates that are interested in excelling academically rather than in popularity and slacking off, and also building healthy relationships with lecturers and teacher aids, is a good recipe for success.

I would like to thank the SVGAT for helping me financially in my studies and am very much interested in being a member.”

Jasmine Homer received the St. Vincent and Grenadines Association’s Scholarship in 2012 while attending the University of Toronto. She is still attending university and on graduation plans to work for one year before going on to graduate school for a career in the legal profession.

Jasmine noted that she had to quickly adjust to a level of study that called for more indepth analysis and critical thinking which made her look at the world differently. She indicated that this level of learning forces you to challenge the status quo and develop a more global outlook on life. As a result, she found herself at Queen’s Park in a protest march protesting the high cost of education. “University” she said “is a different world”.