

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Good Hope Country Day 'Soca Mix Up' Shakes Up Cliques

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Who knew that a simple online search would turn into a fun-filled afternoon with 157 high schoolers playing UNO, musical chairs and just enjoying each others' company--all with the goal of taking a stand against high school cliques.

Such was the case at Good Hope Country Day School's first "Soca Mix Up", held Wednesday at the school, and was the brainchild of 17-year-old senior, Jamaris Washshah.

JJ, as Washshah is affectionately known, said the idea came to her when she was surfing the Web (for an unrelated topic) and arrived at the DoSomething.org website, an

organization that describes itself as one that "makes the world suck less." The company says it's "one of the largest organizations for young people and social change," with three million members that "tackle campaigns that impact every cause, from poverty to violence to the environment to literally everything else."

JJ learned that one of DoSomething's many activities included staging lunchtime musical chairs events to help students interact with each other. With that, she decided she would host a similar event at Country Day Good Hope School, but with a decidedly Caribbean twist. Thus, the "Soca Mix Up" was born.



from student council advisers, JJ set out to create an event for high school, 9th-12th graders, together.

Students get in on a game of musical chairs at Good

Hope Country Day School's 'Soca Mix Up'.

"It's to encourage kids to engage each other outside of cliques," JJ said of the event. "And to help break down the barriers between students in different age groups."

The student council officer and longtime Dolphins swim team member, recalled an incident she'd been made aware of during the freshmen/senior trip to Mt. Victory this year. JJ said she was told that a number of the freshman girls reportedly felt excluded from the group. That further ignited her passion to put on the event.

And a well organized event it was. Despite lamenting the loss of the soca music she had prepared for the musical chairs portion of the Soca Mix Up, the event went off without a hitch.

It was held in the school's pavilion and consisted of students playing UNO cards, musical chairs and answering 'get-to-know-you' questions posed by other students.

But what was unique is that the five long tables situated throughout the spacious room contained a mixture of 14 to 18-year-olds, the entire senior class, interacting with each other. JJ said she and the other student council officers who planned the event, decided to mix in different age groups at each table.

"There is no reason why a person's age should be a barrier to becoming friends with someone," JJ said, adding that "no matter the age, in most cases, students can find common ground with each other."

Another student council officer, 17-year-old Ihab Idhelia, said the Soca Mix Up was a great tool to "get rid of inside cliques and get to know each other by name." As he looked out over the crowd of laughing, talking and, in the case of musical chairs, cheering students, Idhelia said he considered the event to be a successful one.

"I think it's a success because everybody is interacting and mingling with each other," he said.

Idhelia even suggested that other schools throughout the island should consider hosting an activity like the Soca Mix Up, adding that "it's easy to set up."



One student, who goes by the name Beef, a 10th grader, said it was "nice" to attend the event and to "get to know people you don't know." Beef also admitted one of the things he enjoyed about the activity was being out of class.

Izhani Rosa, another 10th grader, said she enjoyed musical chairs and thought it was "great" that the student council hosted such an event to bring students together.

"It's nice to see different sides of people," Rosa said of the experience.

Country Day Good Hope School merged during the 2013-2014 school year after Good Hope's closure at the end of the 2012-2013 school year. This is the second year the school is combined.

JJ said that scenario naturally lent itself to cliques being formed among students of the two schools, but said she hopes the school could work together and begin seeing itself as one.

"These were two good schools, now we have one great school," JJ said.

She continued: "I think we can build new traditions for the whole school," adding that she hopes activities like the Soca Mix Up will continue long after she has graduated next June.

Besides JJ and Idhelia, student council officers Riis Motta and Jacob Anderson also helped organize the activity. Senator Sammuel Sanes donated the UNO cards, index cards students used to write 'getting-to-know-you' questions, and name tags.

Feature Image: High school students play UNO at Good Hope Country Day 'Soca Mix Up'

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