



# Caystone

The Newsletter of Lyford Cay Foundations

## Lyford Cay Foundations: Bridging Gaps To Opportunity

### FOCUS Graduate Daleisha Sweeting Achieves College Dreams

With your support, Lyford Cay Foundations work toward the goal of building a prosperous, healthy and peaceful Bahamas.

Our initiatives undergird pathways to education, opportunity and a stronger Bahamas. Thanks to our donors, the Foundations' programmes help bridge the gaps that prevent too many from attaining their goals

Since its inception in 2011, nearly 150 students have completed the eight years of the FOCUS programme and have found FOCUS to be a reliable bridge to post-secondary education.

Daleisha Sweeting is a FOCUS graduate and newly named Cutillas Scholar who has been partnering with the Foundations to pursue her dreams since her formative years.

"It feels like just yesterday when I applied to be in FOCUS in Grade 4," reflected Daleisha. "It was such an honour to be selected that I didn't think about what that lay ahead."

Over the next eight years, Daleisha devoted 15 Saturdays per school year to FOCUS enrichment activities that included learning interventions in mathematics, English, science and social studies. When not involved in project-based-learning, Daleisha and her peers participated in field trips, sports and extracurricular activities. Summers



were even busier with FOCUS Summer SLAM, a 30-day summer intensive at the University of The Bahamas.

For Daleisha, the adventure was well worth it.

"With the help of FOCUS, I maintained a 3.5 grade point average. I am now an experienced debater, speech competitor and young reporter for the environment!"

Daleisha was salutatorian for H.O. Nash Junior High School and received a scholarship to attend St. John's College, a private school.

With FOCUS as a foundation, she became the first in her family to attend college by enrolling at the University of The Bahamas.

Today, Lyford Cay Foundations continue to be there for Daleisha. She is now enrolled as a first-year Law and Criminal Justice student at the University of The Bahamas and has been named as one of the Foundations' Cutillas Scholars.

As a Cutillas Scholar, Daleisha receives a scholarship, critical academic resources and guidance. Daleisha is grateful for the support she has received to bridge the gaps.

"I am honoured to attend the UB with support from The Bahamas Government Tertiary Grant and the Cutillas Scholarship. I aim to make my FOCUS family proud."

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# Update

## FOCUS

### SUMMER SLAM: A BRIDGE TO SUMMER LEARNING

#### EXPLORING THROUGH PROJECT BASED LEARNING

This summer, FOCUS participants from grades 5 through 9 transformed into architects, engineers, rollercoaster designers and city planners!

Exploring the theme “Bridging Communities: Designing Sustainable Connections,” students eagerly embarked on the journey of bridges for the Project Based Learning (PBL) aspect of the programme.



Students were excited to tackle questions that included:

- How can we design and build a bridge that meets the needs of our community? (Grades 5 & 6)
- How can we design and build a rollercoaster that incorporates bridges to create an exciting and safe ride experience? (Grades 7 & 8)
- How can we design/develop a game that incorporates bridges as a central theme or gameplay mechanic? (Grade 9)

By delving into these questions, students learned important research skills; became more familiar with various types of

bridges and structures; learned about architectural and engineering careers; and expanded their problem-solving skills.

Language arts and mathematic curriculum topics were all aligned with the theme to make it an even richer experience for the students.

“It is a student-centered approach to instruction that helps students apply the knowledge they gain to national needs and global challenges,” said Dr. Nicola Virgill-Rolle, Executive Director of Lyford Cay Foundations. “Project-based learning has been found to accelerate learning and improve the retention of content and newly acquired skills.”

#### 2024, FOCUS FAST FACTS:

- 243 students from under-resourced communities served
- Eight primary schools participated
- 15 students graduated from the programme with 46 new students entering
- 89% overall attendance rate for Summer SLAM
- 100% participation in Project Based Learning

# You Are Building A Better Bahamas

You bridge the way to unique learning opportunities for students



# ON COURSE TO COLLEGE: BRIDGING GAPS THROUGH TECHNICAL EDUCATION



While the younger FOCUS students spent action-packed days at the University of The Bahamas, FOCUS students in grades 10-12, known as FOCUS On Course To College (OCTC) also had an exciting summer full of hands-on learning at another premier Bahamian educational institution.

For the first time during Summer SLAM, the older students explored vocational education at Bahamas Technical and Vocational Institute (BTVI). Each day, OCTC students immersed themselves in a variety of courses including Fashion and Beauty Trades, Business and IT, Electronics and Media, and Construction and Mechanical Trades.

Additionally, OCTC students continued their English and mathematics essential courses, and received an Occupational

Safety and Health Administration training certification.

OCTC students were excited to present their learnings and experiences in a showcase at the end of summer for friends, family and BTVI instructors.

“Because of their summer experience at BTVI, each FOCUS OCTC student now has a skill that they can carry with them as well as several trades that they can explore as career possibilities,” said Executive Director, Dr. Nicola Virgill-Rolle.

“We thought it was important that students understand the breadth of what post-secondary education includes. They now understand that vocational and technical education are also wonderful options after completing high school.”

# Spotlight ON OUR SCHOLARS

## CREATING SUSTAINABILITY AND GROWTH

**Scholar:**  
D'Alo Farrington ('24)  
**Award:**  
Bahamas Resilience and Excellence Undergraduate Award  
**College:**  
Ontario Technical University  
**Major:**  
Networking & Information Technology Security



**For D'Alo Farrington,** obtaining an undergraduate degree is more than just a personal accomplishment -- it is an opportunity to strengthen the nation.

"Upon completing my bachelor's degree, I aim to return to The Bahamas to make a meaningful contribution to the advancement of cybersecurity practices, thus strengthening the nation's digital resilience and security posture," shared D'Alo.

Standing out among his senior high school peers with a stellar academic record and an aptitude for the sciences, D'Alo could have pursued any STEM-related field. However, a concern for the digital advancement of The Bahamas propelled him to pursue a degree in information technology security.

"With the evolution of technology, it is necessary for more advanced cybersecurity systems to be put in place to safeguard national security, confidential business data and the privacy of citizens," said D'Alo.

"I look forward to being equipped to address pressing challenges facing The Bahamas such as digital literacy, access to technology and cybersecurity.

With D'Alo's eyes firmly focused on the digital potential of The Bahamas, his future and the future of the country is bright!

**Scholar:**  
Geordinell Thurston ('24)  
**Award:**  
Bahamas Resilience and Excellence Technical Award  
**College:**  
Holland College  
**Major:** Medical Support Services



While many think about the impact that doctors, nurses and other frontline professionals have on a patient's healthcare experience, **Geordinell Thurston** realizes that medical support behind the scenes also plays a critical role.

"My career goals are deeply rooted in making a meaningful impact on the healthcare landscape of The Bahamas," said Geordinell. "One of my primary aspirations is to pursue a career in healthcare administration where I am able to streamline administrative processes and enhance the efficiency of healthcare facilities across the country."

Geordinell already envisions the many ways that her diploma in medical support services will improve healthcare in hospitals, clinics and governmental health agencies across the country. She looks forward to becoming a specialist in accurate medical billing, coding and reimbursement.

She also dreams of empowering patients through education and outreach.

"By organizing health workshops and community programmes, and advocating for patient rights, I aim to contribute to a healthier and more informed population."

Geordinell's goal of bridging the way to a healthier Bahamas through medical support means great thing for patients for years to come.

### 2024

#### 33 NEW Scholars named

- Nearly \$1 Million invested
- 48% first generation students
- 30% public school students
- 52% from Family islands

**You Are Building A Better Bahamas**  
You empower Scholars to bridge the way to solutions

# ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT: Davon Edgecombe ('08)

## BRIDGING THE PATH TO SUCCESS THROUGH EDUCATION AND DETERMINATION

Showcasing an extensive background in project management, architecture, and engineering, **Davon Edgecombe's** curriculum vitae begs the question, "Is there anything that he can't do?"

Davon's journey is a shining example of how education, hard work and determination can come together to create an amazing career.

Long before Davon became a sought-after structural engineer, he was a young man seeking career direction.

"After graduating from C.V. Bethel High School, I went to work in landscaping," shared Davon. "I knew that I wanted more, so I enrolled in night classes at what was then the College of The Bahamas."

Determined to succeed, Davon worked during the day and pursued his Associate's degree in Architecture in the evenings. He quickly showed promise, making the Dean's List and receiving the Top Performance Award from the Institute of Bahamian Architects. Despite excelling academically, first-hand experiences showed Davon that architecture was not the right fit.

"After interning and working part-time at architecture firms while at the College of The Bahamas, I realised that I wanted to be an engineer not an architect," said Davon.

With the support of scholarships from Lyford Cay Foundations and others, Davon enrolled in Drexel University in Philadelphia double majoring in civil engineering and architectural engineering. Even with scholarships, Davon admits that financing his studies took discipline.

"During summer breaks, I worked on building docks, did architectural work here and there, and even worked as a night-time security guard to make ends meet," he said.

Davon was determined to get as much experience in his field as possible by completing internships with leading employers in Philadelphia.

To strengthen his skills even more after graduation, Davon enrolled in the Harvard University Graduate School of Design Discovery Program as a Sustainable Exuma Scholar with a concentration in architecture.



"This programme was truly challenging," noted Davon. "You were being critiqued every day. Everything was observed from how you made presentations to how you interacted with your peers. They were looking at the quality of your work and whether you could grasp the concepts."

Upon returning to Nassau, Davon immediately became involved with several high-end projects providing design engineering, construction administration services, civil engineering and many other structural engineering services. These projects opened the floodgates to opportunities.

Today, Davon heads Lignin Structural, his own engineering consulting company that provides services for luxury residences, commercial buildings, condominiums and other structures. His work is known in respected communities throughout The Bahamas.

Even with a busy career, Davon makes time to mentor the next generation of engineering professionals. He has volunteered with FOCUS and serves as the civil engineering instructor for BETA Camp, a STEM camp for Bahamian students ages 11-16.

Davon is grateful that Lyford Cay Foundations were a part of his journey to success.

"I was able to worry less about paying for my education and actually focus more on learning and deciding my next steps," he shared. "Giving is such a regenerative process. Donors water the roots of a plant and then watch it grow into a flower that gives back."



# Update

## GRANTS

### BETA CAMP

BRIDGING THE GAP IN STEM CAREERS



Lack of exposure to the breadth of careers available in the sciences is one of the greatest barriers to young Bahamian pursuing careers in STEM. The Bahamas Engineering and Technology Advancement Camp, or BETA Camp, was founded to help alleviate this problem.

Each summer BETA Camp works with students in grades 7 - 12 to increase their awareness and exposure to STEM. This is done through an immersive weeklong experience facilitated by professional engineers.

In BETA Camp, students are exposed to multiple engineering disciplines through an in-depth curriculum designed to inspire and develop the next generation of scientists and engineers. During sessions, students actively engage in building prototypes and solving real world problems.

With the programme being run totally by volunteers, including Bahamian engineers from a wide array of disciplines, BETA Camp is dependent on community donations. Lyford Cay Foundations have supported BETA Camp through the years with grants totaling \$40,000 since 2015. These grants have been used to waive fees for underprivileged students, subsidize travel costs for family island students and purchase STEM kits for students.

“Because of the support of Lyford Cay Foundations and other funders, BETA Camp has impacted more than 650 students across 10 islands,” said D’Andre Wilson-Ihejirika (Lyford Cay Foundation Scholar Alumni ’06), BETA Camp’s

cofounder and an Alumni Scholar. “As an organization that relies mainly on fundraising to keep costs affordable for students, Lyford Cay Foundations grants have enabled BETA Camp to provide an exceptional experience for our students.”

BETA Camp has a strong return rate of over 40%, cultivating a true interest in engineering disciplines among campers. Through the camp, many students have been inspired to study engineering locally and abroad.

The growing interest is vital to The Bahamas, as the country faces an increasing need for skilled engineers to support infrastructure development and technological advancements.

Given the organisation’s success, it is now exploring the possibility of taking the programme to the family islands. BETA Camp is also in the process of creating other programmes to further its impact, including The Bright Minds Academy that will target primary school students and The Delta Club, a student-led group for high school participants.

“By cultivating students’ interests, BETA Camp is helping to build a future workforce that can drive innovation and economic growth in The Bahamas,” shared D’Andre. “With Lyford Cay Foundations’ grants, BETA Camp’s impact has been able to continue and improve.”

# You Are Building A Better Bahamas

You provide access for future leaders in STEM.

# ZONTA CLUB OF NEW PROVIDENCE

## BRIDGING THE WAY TO BRIGHTER FUTURES FOR GIRLS

Zonta International is a global service organisation of executives in business working to empower women and girls worldwide. Locally, the Zonta Club of New Providence, established in 1997, is a non-profit organisation comprised of professional women committed to improving the lives of Bahamian girls and women through impactful programming. With the help of Lyford Cay Foundations, the Zonta Club of New Providence is bringing its mission to young women who need it the most.

The club recently received a grant of \$5,000 to enhance its work for the Path to Empowerment and Advancement through Knowledge (PEAK) programme. PEAK, which was launched in September 2022, is geared toward improving the lives of residents of Willie Mae Pratt Centre for Girls, a facility for young women who have encountered difficulties with the legal system and are working toward rehabilitation.

“PEAK is a way for us to intervene in the girls’ lives to teach them positive ways of living so they can be empowered to reach their full potential,” said Ms. Claudine Farquharson, Chair of the Grant Committee for Zonta Club of New Providence. “We want the young ladies to know that their past mistakes do not define their future.”

Through the programme, Zonta members work weekly for nine months of the year with girls ages 12-17 to help them develop the skills they will need to reintegrate into society. The club members mentor the young women and provide them with positive influences intended to lead them to brighter futures.

Participants are tutored three days a week by qualified teachers. Additionally, participants attend weekly seminars on self-worth, respect, conflict resolution and other fundamental life skills.

For PEAK participants, success is measured by meeting the following goals: improving core education in math, English and reading comprehension; learning life skills; replacing negative decision making with more positive alternative behaviors; and connecting with positive influences which will impact their lives and future development.

“The residents at the Willie Mae Pratt Centre have consistently expressed their enjoyment of the PEAK Programme and have given the club positive feedback,” shared Ms. Farquharson. “The young women continue to show marked improvement in their academics, which increases their chances of passing national exams. Lyford Cay Foundations’ impact has been phenomenal!”



# Partnerships

## PICTET BANK & TRUST

BRIDGING THE WAY FOR THE NEXT GENERATION

At FOCUS, students learn through many avenues, including through presentations from professionals in a variety of fields.

Lyford Cay Foundations are grateful to Pictet Bank and Trust CEO and Managing Director Carlos De la Torre and his team who shared life lessons on topics that range from banking to goal setting with FOCUS students on Saturdays.

“Education has the remarkable ability to drive change. Through our investment in knowledge, we not only foster personal development but also contribute to a brighter future for the Bahamas,” shared Mr. De la Torre, when asked about what motivated Pictet’s involvement. “We are thrilled to extend our support to the FOCUS program, as they share our unwavering commitment to education and their dedication to making a positive difference in the lives of Bahamians. We believe that through strategic investments in education, we can forge a path of progress that positively impacts our community”

Thank you to Melan Georges, Lawrence Glinton, Fernando Guerra, Tyrez Sturrup, Kirsten Sweeting and others from Pictet Bank & Trust Ltd. who are advancing the next generation.



### ABOUT US

Lyford Cay Foundations are philanthropic organisations with deep roots in the Bahamian community, the United States and Canada. Lyford Cay Foundations are two distinct legal entities: Lyford Cay Foundation, Inc. and The Canadian Lyford Cay Foundation, registered public charities in the United States (Federal I.D. #23-7025275) and in Canada (CRA BN/Registration # 11921 9301 RR0001) respectively.

Lyford Cay Foundations believe that increasing educational attainment across the country is key to the development of a prosperous, healthy and peaceful Bahamas.

### DONATE TODAY

Generous friends like you help bright young Bahamians in their pursuit of educational excellence and assist with community building.

Without you, these life-changing opportunities would not be possible.

To make a gift, please visit [lyfordcayfoundations.org/donate-online/](http://lyfordcayfoundations.org/donate-online/) or call us at 242-362-4910

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