

YOUNG OBSERVER

CANDY STRIPERS: JO-RENA DAVIS WINS TOP AWARD

Selfless, responsible and totally committed

'That's like the furthest you can go and I strive at everything I do. I always wanted it so I worked hard and I got it.'

— Jo-Rena Davis

By Stacey Smith

Jo-Rena Davis was selected as this year's Head Stripper at the annual Candy Striping Awards Ceremony in June. Her strong qualities in leadership, responsibility and commitment to service earned her the position.

And now she has the role of helping the Candy Stripper Chairperson supervise the volunteers.

At the ceremony, Strippers were also presented with pins for having earned 50, 75, 100, 150, 200, 300 and more hours of service and senior Strippers were chosen as well.

Although 17-year-old Jo-Rena was a senior Stripper last year, she said being the Head Stripper is definitely more of a challenge and a greater responsibility.

"It would be because you have to know a lot and be good at everything you do — like you would in any leadership role."

She is honoured to have received this award.

"That's like the furthest you can go and I strive at everything I do. I always wanted it so I worked hard and I got it."

Jo-Rena, who is interested in teaching but also enjoys art and media, said: "I think, after my career is up and running, I want to be an Evangelist and go to another country to help people."

This sense of selflessness is something she seems to have acquired during her experience volunteering at the hospital. Of working in her preferred areas: the maternity ward and Continuing Care Unit (CCU), she said: "To be working along with them (the patients) gives them more of a sense of security and shows that there are people in the hospital that really care. And we aren't getting paid but this is something that we like to do — we're volunteers."

She commented on the scepticism young people often have when it comes to dealing with the older generation. "A lot of times people think 'Eew — old people — you're going to have to deal with blood specimens'. But most of the older people were really nice, some might snap at times but in general it's not the boring environment some people may

ABOUT CANDY STRIPING

The Candy Striping programme at King Edward VII Memorial Hospital has been thriving ever since its initiation in 1964 by the Women's Hospital Auxiliary — now called the Hospitals Auxiliary of Bermuda.

Still under their administration, the Candy Striping programme (term 'Candy Striper' originating from their traditional red and white striped uniforms) has a current membership of 80 junior volunteers who log in a total of 7,000 hours per year.

There are also about 35 new volunteers each June called Strummers, who are enrolled to work during July and August, along with regular Strippers. At the end of the summer months, those who demonstrate a commitment to service and show an interest in the programme are invited to remain. (Incoming Strummers must be 14 in the April before

they enter the programme.) The Strippers are supervised by the programme's chairperson, Ms Penny Ray, who directs their training and placement in weekly assignments.

Candy Striping is an opportunity for both males and females between the ages of 14-18 to take on the same responsibilities as adult members.

That includes volunteering in the Pink Café and Gift Shop, at the Dialysis Unit, on the wards assisting patients, delivering flowers, helping out in the pharmacy, aiding on the maternity ward and working on the Continuing Care Units.

It's a big commitment. A Stripper must complete two years of service during which 100 hours must be given each year and their timetable includes Saturdays, school holidays and summer months.

think it is. Considering they are in hospital they are actually usually very upbeat."

In fact, 18-year-old Bryce Williams, who was last year's Head Stripper, said he particularly enjoyed feeding the old folks in the Continuing Care Unit (CCU). "I like old people a lot. I don't know, I just find them loveable. They do so much for our community so I feel that it's only right that we give back to them."

He said, being a Pink Panther (which is the name given to the male Strippers), is "an experience of a life time."

"I enjoyed the opportunities which it allowed me to further my leadership and communication skills. Many times I was put in situations which required those skills and slowly but surely, by being put in those situations, those skills were worked upon and have developed."

Jo-Rena said: "Apart from learning how to make coffee you meet a lot of interesting people."

She described herself as "quiet, but not shy" and said being a Candy Stripper and working in areas such as the café enhanced her social skills.

"You're working with people of every background."

She gave an example.

"There was this one time when I was working by myself doing wards and there was a man — a patient — who didn't speak English. A nurse told me he

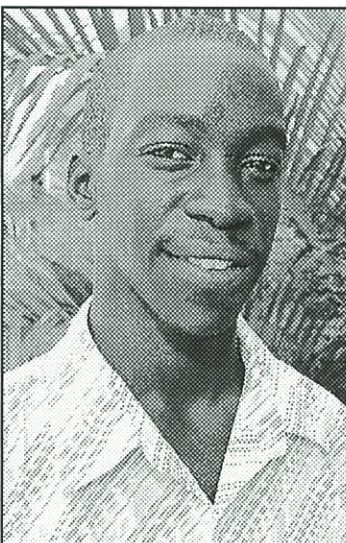


Photo by Chris Burville

Community caregiver: Former Head Stripper Bryce Williams.

was Hispanic. My old Spanish teacher Mrs. Shantee Grant was volunteering as a Pink Lady, so I went downstairs before she left and she was able to go upstairs and assist the man."

Jo-Rena said that incident taught

her about team work. "Networking and having good people skills plays a big and important part. By me having a good relationship with my Spanish teacher and being able to call on her, I was able to find out what food the man really wanted and not just let him have whatever the nurses were going to give him — which is what happened before. Mrs. Grant was the only one who could understand him and as she always said 'people should eat what they want'."

So what's the difference between the role of a Pink Panther and the role of a Candy Stripper? Bryce, who has been a Pink Panther for about four years, said they are more or less the same. "We both get assigned the same jobs."

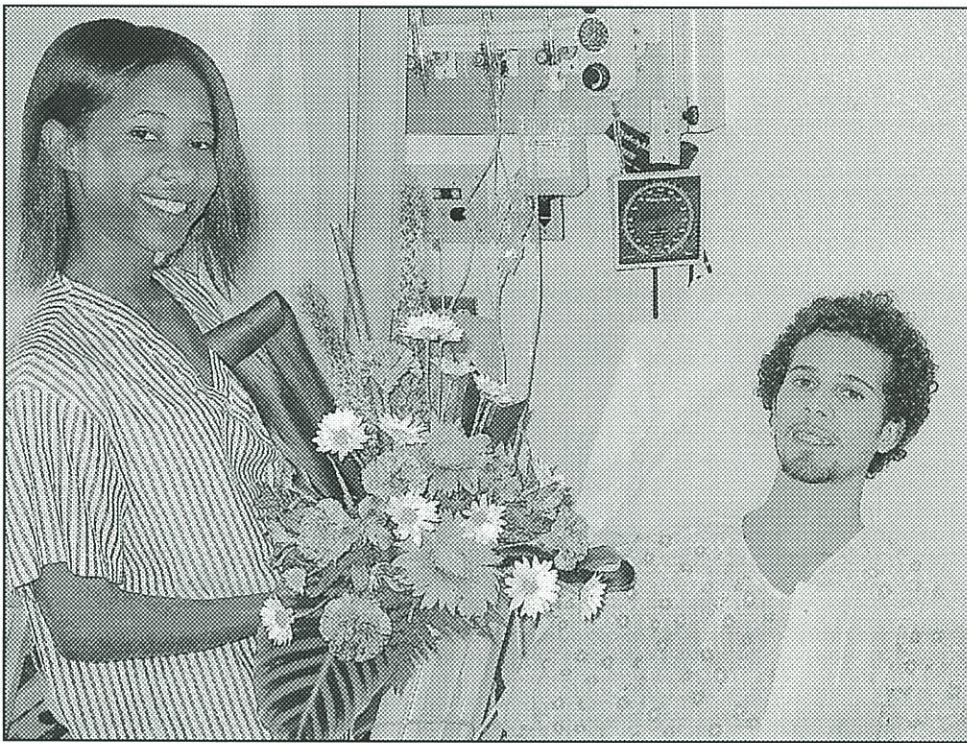
Would he recommend the programme to other males? "Definitely." Though he admitted that he wasn't too excited about it when he first started out.

"I was like: *What do I have to come here for?* — but I ended up enjoying it. It just goes to show that your attitude takes you a long way. If you have a positive outlook on life, that's what you end up reaping."

Jo-Rena described the programme as "something positive to do."

"It gives you a chance to work with other members of the community, an opportunity to see and experience parts of the hospital that the average person wouldn't, gain knowledge of the hospital and if you're interested in a career in

Helping to heal: Head Stripper Jo-Rena Davis stands beside patient Geoffrey Smith at King Edward VII Memorial Hospital.



the hospital it's a good place to learn."

Alana Wade, who was also selected as Deputy Head Stripper along with Charee Butterfield, has received the annual \$5,000 Education Award for post-secondary studies. She was picked as a result of her commitment to community service and academic achievement.

Eighteen-year-old Alana is in her third and final year of the Candy Striping programme and has enjoyed every moment of it, especially "working on the wards". She said she decided to venture into this form of community service because she wanted to "experience different things".

On her new role as Deputy Head Stripper, she said: "I have to make sure that everybody is doing what they're supposed to do, set a good example for the rest of them (the Strippers) and train the new ones."

Ms Wade, who never had a doubt about joining the Candy Stripper programme, echoed Bryce and Jo-Rena when she said she would recommend it to anyone, "because they can meet new people and broaden their horizons by learning things that have to do with the hospital and become more involved in the community".

"I've learned that not everybody is as fortunate as I am and everyone needs to be cared for and looked after."

Although she will be over the maximum age of a Candy Stripper in December, she may just continue her hospital service as a pink lady.

Alana, who is a proud 2006 Bermuda Institute (BI) graduate, is looking forward to attending the Bermuda College this autumn. "I think it's a very important step to graduate from high school because you've actually made it — you're half way there." She will begin her studies in early childhood development.

"I love working with children."

Jo-Rena will enter her final year at Mount St. Agnes in September and Bryce, who recently graduated from Warwick Academy, is off to France on Rotary Exchange in August.

Individuals interested in becoming a Stripper are advised to fill out an application at the age of twelve because there is a two year waiting list.

The Nis and the White Mare (Denmark)

In Scandanavia, they tell of a being called a "nis," which is a little like a gnome and a little like a brownie and a little like an elf. A farm on which a nis decides to live is very lucky indeed, for the nis will do much work and many kind deeds, asking for nothing in return except to be left alone to do its work at night, in secret.

There once was a very old farmer in Denmark who had the great fortune to own a white mare. The mare was beautiful, gentle and hard-working, but that was not why the farmer was lucky to own it. He was lucky because a nis had become fond of the mare and had attached itself to the horse.

Every night, the nis would come into the farmer's barn to feed the mare, and brush it and groom it and care for it in every way. The nis would bring so much corn to feed the mare that there was always a great deal left over, which the nis would distribute among the farmer's cattle, so that they, too, were as sleek and fat and fine as the mare whom the nis loved so well.

Now, the old farmer was not a foolish man. He saw that his cattle were far more healthy and prosperous than those of any of his neighbours.

And as he rode behind the mare in his buggy, or walked behind her as she pulled the plow, he saw that her mane was always cared for, that any sores or insect bites she might have in the evening would be healed by morning and that she was as healthy as his cattle, and perhaps even a bit fatter, despite how hard she worked during the day.

The old farmer guessed that his mare had a nis caring for her, and so, when he closed up the barn in the

FOLK TALES AND FABLES

retold by Mike Peterson, c. 2005
illustrations by Narina Tay, c. 2005

evening, he would go into his house and be certain not to come out again until morning, for he knew that, if he disturbed the nis in the least, it would leave his farm forever.

The farmer was very wise, but he was also very old, and at last he died, and his wife sold the farm and went to live with her sister in the city. The day she moved out, she went to the barn to say good-bye to the mare, and she told the new owner to take good care of it, for her husband had always said the white mare was the source of all his good fortune.

But the new owner laughed at such nonsense, and within a few weeks, he had sold the mare to a neighbouring farmer and bought himself a mule to pull his plow instead.

When the mare went to her new home, the nis went with her. Now the new owner of the old farm discovered that he had to work twice as hard to grow enough feed for his cattle, and that, even so, they were never as plump and fine as they had been when he first bought the farm. At last, he discovered that he could barely work hard enough just to pay his bills, and that he was rapidly become a poor man.

As for the farmer who had bought the mare, he had just the opposite luck, for now the nis was bringing extra corn to feed his cattle, and every day they grew fat-

ter and sleeker and gave more milk than ever before, milk that was rich and creamy and as good as any in the land.

This farmer knew that the old man had always said his luck was in the white mare, and, as he walked behind it and saw how clean it was each morning and how well-groomed, he suspected that the mare had come with a nis. But although he was wise enough to guess why his farm was suddenly prospering, he was not as wise as the old farmer had been.

One night, he closed up the barn as always, but then slipped back inside and hid himself in the hay at the back of the barn. Sure enough, when the moon rose, he heard the barn door creak as the nis came in, carrying a great sack of corn.

The farmer watched silently as the nis filled the manger of his special love, the white mare, and went around the barn distributing the rest of the corn to the cattle. Then the nis returned to the mare's box stall and gently groomed her, brushing out her tail and mane and lifting each great leg in turn to tend carefully to her ankles and hooves.

At last, the farmer saw the nis, with tears running down his cheeks, kiss the mare gently on her soft, velvety nose, for the nis knew full well that the farmer was hiding in the hay, and that, because the farmer had seen him, this would be the last time he would ever come to visit the white mare.

And after that night, neither farm prospered, for neither farmer had the sense to be grateful for good fortune.

Questions to consider

1. How did the nis show its love for the white mare?
2. Why did the first farmer stay away from the barn at night?
3. What kind of work did the mare do for the farmer?
4. Why did the third farmer hide in the barn?
5. Why did each farm end up not doing very well?
6. Why do you think the second farmer sold the mare and bought a mule?

Readers under 14 years who submit correct written answers to Newspapers in- Education at The Royal Gazette by August 22 will be eligible for a draw for a book token donated by The Bermuda Bookstore. Remember to include contact details with your answers.