

KAROLIN TROUBETZKOY -SPEECH IN ST.MAARTEN

Let me say it upfront that without the strong support of Interval International, the work of the CHTA Education Foundation would have been far more onerous.

For sure, the partnership between Interval International and the Foundation which is now in its 15th year has been an enormously fruitful one for which we are incredibly grateful to Interval.

Thanks to our partnership and collaboration with Interval, we could open doors for so many of our young people but also hospitality workers already in the industry who wanted to further their education and improve on their qualifications - all of these individuals benefitted from educational scholarships and now also training programs and helped them to join or advance their careers in the world's largest and fastest growing sector, tourism.

On behalf of all the alumni and those yet to come, I thank our dear friends at Interval for their support.

And now please also join me in extending congratulations to all of our graduates who worked so diligently.

Thanks to our trainers Louise and Suzanne, the courses were designed in such a way that were both educational and enjoyable. Because as we are being told, we learn far better if there is a bit of fun, too.

These programs are specifically designed to provide immediate and tangible tools which motivate, invigorate and enthuse YOU, the team members who are such an integral part of the guest experience and who ensure a guest's Caribbean vacation is one to remember and return to again and again.

We focused the training this week on areas and disciplines which contribute to every hotel and vacation experience.

Tuesday focused on Supervisors and Managers with HEALTHY PEOPLE MANAGEMENT. In this energetic, interactive, day participants discovered key criteria for healthy and productive relationships with colleagues which enrich their working experience, improve productivity and shine through to the guest's experience.

Wednesday was a day for both Engineering and Front Desk staff members.

ENGINEERING WITH EMPATHY focused on customer-facing engineering and maintenance supervisors and team members, with interactive sessions, role-playing and group discussion to gain a better understanding of a guest's vacation mindset, and reading visual clues to ensure empathetic interaction to all situations.

The FRONT DESK EQ V AI session for customer-facing front office supervisors and team members included group discussion and key learning points ready for immediate practice on-property. Included was understanding how Artificial Intelligence and robotics are advancing within the hospitality industry, identifying both its benefits and negative impacts and challenges and how to ensure human interaction is positive and genuine.

And last, but certainly not least, yesterday we had our HAPPY HOUSEKEEPERS! session, where participants discovered the positive impact they have on the guest experience and the hotel's overall reputation. The day included personal working health and safety tips, guest interaction skills and an exploration of organic cleaning products which are better for the hotel, guests, staff and environment.

We at the CHTA Education Foundation would like to thank the trainers, Louise John and Suzanne Shillingford-Brooks from TalkAbout Earth Solutions, for their exceptional work this week.

As always, they have delivered informative, educational and practical programs with boundless enthusiasm!

Finally, thank you to the more than 86 professionals here in St. Maarten who participated this week and also thank you to their General Managers who have supported their training and development.

We hope you enjoyed the training and trust it will enhance your day-to-day working lives and by extension, the vacation experiences of your visitors.

Ladies and gentlemen, we have achieved much since the CHTA Education Foundation was founded in 1986, with a mandate to support education and training programs for the region's current and future professionals in the hospitality and tourism industry.

Thanks to solid planning and efficient execution, the CHTA Education Foundation is now the largest hospitality charitable program in the region, having raised and distributed more than \$2 million in the last 10 years alone.

Over the past 5 years, the CHTA Education Foundation awarded over 100 scholarships to full-time students from 32 Caribbean countries, including 2 St Maarten nationals, Nathalie Boston and Caroline Nolasco, both of whom attended and graduated from the University of St. Maarten.

A special shout out to the CHTA Education Foundation volunteer trustees. You are busy people and we rely on your extensive experience and high-level connections to enhance the work of the foundation.

We could not do what we do without the support of our corporate sponsors but also our National Hotel & Tourism Associations and indeed, our individual hotels and resorts all of whom have been generous with their time, financial support and donation of room nights. We could not do what we do without our dedicated volunteers who organize benefit auctions and special events.

The CHTA Education Foundation had some great news this year when the prestigious Swiss hospitality school Les Roches Global Hospitality Education pledged to provide partial scholarships for Caribbean nationals seeking undergraduate degrees at this highly regarded tertiary institution.

This came as a result of the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the CHTA Education Foundation and Les Roches which is known for its rigid preparation of students for successful international careers in the hospitality and service industries.

This partnership was important because for Caribbean tourism to remain competitive on a global scale, our Caribbean hospitality leaders of the future must be given access to the highest quality education and training the world has to offer.

Additionally, our partnership is an excellent opportunity for Caribbean nationals to receive a highly desirable hospitality business degree, gain an entrepreneurial mindset and a global outlook in the process.

To enhance the value of our training we recognized full-time study is only one area where the CHTA Education Foundation should focus its efforts.

We know how skilled employees raise the bar of overall service across our region, so the Foundation launched its on-island training programs last year to deliver innovative educational programs for hospitality staff members working in the industry. We have been able to bring on

island training to Barbados, Saint Lucia, Grenada , Tobago and with Interval's support we were in Aruba and now we are here in Saint Maarten.

Again, congratulations to all!

And to our host Saint Maarten - you deserve special praise for the resilience of all St. Maarteners. From my visit, I am extremely impressed by the remarkable progress you have made bouncing back from Hurricane Irma in 2017.

I must mention my special affection for St. Maarten and how in my previous role as President of CHTA we launched the One Caribbean Family initiative, which raised over ¼ million US Dollars all together, with many tens of thousands of dollars for St. Maarten after the hurricane. These funds were used to restore attractions, train our young people, support the operations of the St. Maarten Hospitality and Trade Association, and enable members to share with the world that St. Maarten, while setback, was on the verge of making a strong comeback. You deserve a round of applause.

One of the valuable initiatives that came out when the Education Foundation and the CHTA did some brain storming in the wake of the devastating hurricanes was to set up the Caribbean Job Bank to connect many tourism employees out of work with employment opportunities.

The impact on employees and businesses in some of the region's destinations affected by the hurricanes motivated us to look at how we could assist displaced workers who needed temporary employment, while sharpening their skills and keeping them employed in the industry. The portal encouraged hotels and other tourist-facing employers to post complimentary job ads. Prospective employees also searched the job postings for free as well. We were essentially acting as a broker between supply and demand.

Today, the Job Bank is back in action, specifically to help serve the people of the northern Bahamas whose lives were uprooted by Hurricane Dorian. But this is not all we have done for the Bahamas - in the spirit of our One Caribbean family the CHTA have setup a charity auction of donated room nights from our member hotels and the Education Foundation is also fundraising for the school children of the Northern Bahamas and whatever other training we can support there.

Overall, looking at our Caribbean hospitality industry, between the CHTA and the Education Foundation we want to provide knowledge and education opportunities whether it be in the form of guides, manuals and position papers, statistics, data centers, webinars or training initiatives like the one here in Saint Maarten.

Ladies and gentleman, our industry is flourishing but there will always be competing forces out there, so it is very important for us to ensure our hospitality work force are well educated and prepared to ensure the Caribbean region retains its position at the top of the world's most desirable vacation destinations.

With that said, I look forward to further expand the work of the Education Foundation in the Caribbean region and that we will be able to congratulate many more hospitality professionals on their accomplishments like we do today!

We thank you all here today for helping us to do that ... and once again, we congratulate you on your outstanding accomplishments this week.

The End