



# The Eastern *Vibes*

**Monthly Newsletter 2026**

**February 2026, Issue #139**

## Soca On D' Campus 2



Mrs. Angelina Rampersad-Pierre, Chief Executive Officer presents Ms. Ceula Portillo accompanied by Ms. Jillian Lalsingh with the winning trophy for the Calypso Competition



St. Andrew/St. David, Sports Committee, winners of the Ole Mas Competition is presented with their trophy by Ms. Astra Edwards-Bennett, Wellness Coordinator and President of the Sports and Cultural Club

### In this Issue

- Soca On D' Campus 2
- Highlights of Soca on D' Campus 2
- World Cancer Day Observance
- Carnival Safety and Drug Prevention Outreach
- Moving Together To Get Fit
- Dangers of Consuming Alcohol
- School Carnival Outreach
- We Love Being Baby-Friendly-Sharing is Caring
- Retirement Feature
- Good News
- Forest Fires

**"Dedicated staff in unity, delivering quality care for family, raise your voices, sing it out with me, Caring is the key!"**

The above is a sample of the powerful lyrics from Ceula Portillio's winning Calypso performance at this year's Soca on D' Campus 2.

The event which was held on February 11, 2026, at the Sangre

Grande Hospital Campus staff car park, brought together over **300** staff members to enjoy an atmosphere of culture, creativity and camaraderie. Six contestants showcased exceptional talent in their captivating Calypso performances which kept the audience fully engaged from beginning to end.

## Soca On D' Campus 2 (Cont'd)

The Ole Mas segment brought the curtain down with satire and theatrical flair which was masterly delivered by the four groups. They cleverly highlighted the personalities of ERHA staff, touched on current affairs and reinforced the importance of quality healthcare, as they connected with the audience.

The presentation climaxed with the STAD Sports Committee's, expressive presentation titled **"Cah Behave We Self"** which captivated the audience with their dramatic storytelling and humour. The performance earned them the **1st place** in the Ole Mas Competition. Another outstanding and memorable moment was the unexpected performance by Director David John

who surprised staff with his rhythmic original composition.

The curtain came down on the event with a spectacular performance by Freetown Collective whose dynamic presence and major hits left staff singing the chorus and asking for repeated encores and paparazzi clips.

Staff also enjoyed a delightful selection of local dishes such as doubles, corn soup, pholourie, saheena and Jamaican patties, adding a flavourful touch to the afternoon's festivities.

Overall, **Soca on D' Campus 2** was a true celebration of talent, teamwork and display of the spirit of Carnival.



# Highlights of Soca on D' Campus 2



# Highlights of Soca on D' Campus 2



# World Cancer Day Observance



Aerobics session



Nutrition booth

**The National Cancer Institute stated that as of early 2026, cancer remains a leading global cause of death. Over 40% of cancers are preventable by reducing risk factors such as smoking, diet, physical inactivity and infections.**

With this in mind, the Health Education Department Nariva/Mayaro hosted several outreach activities during the month of February to commemorate World Cancer Day. The aim of these activities was to enlighten persons about the common cancers affecting our population such as breast, prostate, cervical and colorectal cancers, while emphasising the importance of routine screening, healthy lifestyle choices and timely medical consultation.

On February 7, 2026 an aerobic burnout and health fair event was held at the Mayaro/Rio Claro Regional Corporation car park. The participants were guided through an energetic aerobic session by Mel's Fitness prior to the start of the health fair. Simple and effective routines were demonstrated to assist in strengthening the heart and to lower blood pressure. **199** persons participated in the health fair and accessed a range of services which included: blood pressure testing; blood glucose

testing; breast examinations; pap smears; vaccinations, nutrition and lifestyle counseling; medical consultations and seedling distribution. This initiative assisted in strengthening ties between community members, healthcare staff and partner organisations such as the Ministry of Community Development and the Embracing All Real Survivors (EARS) Cancer Support Foundation.

Recognising the power of digital platforms to expand the reach of information, the Health Education Department also produced a short video titled **"World Cancer Day 2026: United by Unique."** This video was published on the Authority's Facebook page and shared with staff via email and WhatsApp. The video highlighted key statistics on the prevalence of cancer in Trinidad and Tobago and provided practical guidance on risk reduction.

Lectures were also conducted at the Chronic Disease Clinics at the Mayaro District Health Facility and Guayaguayare Outreach Centre. A total of **60** persons were present at these sessions. They learned about the different types of cancers and the various lifestyle habits which can assist in lowering their risk.

# Carnival Safety and Drug Prevention Outreach



**Carnival is a celebration of colour, culture, music and connection. It's a time when people come together to celebrate life, freedom and self-expression.** Amidst the excitement, however, it is very important to prioritise drug, alcohol and sexual education since the rate of Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) increases right after carnival **(Hem-Lee-Forsyth, Hunter and McNab, 2019).**

Recognising this, the Health Education Department, Nariva/Mayaro and School Health Unit in collaboration with external stakeholders organised outreach sessions within the region to educate students. The sessions were conducted at the Biche Secondary School; Mayaro Servol Life Centre; Mayaro; Rio Claro West; Rio Claro East and Guayaguayare Secondary Schools on February 4, 5, 9, 10, 11 and 12, 2026 respectively.

Over **730** students and teachers attended the interactive sessions. They were provided with information and practical strategies to assist them to make informed and safe decisions during the carnival season and beyond.

The topics presented included: Actively engaging your senses to perceive the environment and potential risks; Awareness about STI's; Different types of STI's and the different stages of STI's; Short-term and long-term effects of alcohol. The effects of marijuana and club drugs on vital organs and Brain development were also covered along with the

legal implications of drugs and the impact on academic and mental health. Information was also provided on the resources that are available to the public.

Woman Police Constables O'Connor, Browne and Gomez delivered lectures on safety at Mayaro Servol Life Centre and Mayaro Secondary School. The officers encouraged the students to stay aware of their environment and to surround themselves with positive influences.

The sessions on STI awareness and consent were led by Ms. Lisa Prince, District Health Visitor attached to the School Health Unit. Also presenting on this topic were Mrs. Diana Weekes, Acting Helpline Coordinator, National AIDS Coordinating Committee (NACC), Ms. Mawasi Abdullah, Active Listener of the Helpline and Mr. Cyrus Sylvester, Peer Navigator-NACC. The presenters made the students aware about the modes of STI transmission and shared pictures of the advanced stages of STIs in an effort to dissuade the students from engaging in risky sexual activity. The importance of consent was also discussed and a list of support services was provided.

Ms. Josane Williams, Health Education Officer conducted the Drug and Alcohol Misuse sessions. Student engagement was high, and they actively participated in discussions and activities. Several students were familiar with the local names of the different drugs and demonstrated their awareness and interest on the topic.

## Moving Together To Get Fit



On February 12, the Cumuto Outreach Centre came alive with energy, music and movement as the Cumuto Wellness Centre Committee hosted its much-anticipated Fun Aerobic Burnout. The event brought together over **35** enthusiastic participants from neighbouring communities, all eager to break a sweat and enjoy an evening dedicated to health and wellness.

Participants also included members of wellness groups from Coryal and Valencia Wellness Committees, whose presence added to the vibrant and supportive atmosphere. The mix of experienced fitness enthusiasts and first-time participants created a dynamic environment which encouraged everyone to give their best effort while having fun. They were also motivated by the special prizes which were awarded for the biggest crew, youngest participant, oldest participant and the overall winner of the aerobic burnout.

The session was led by three professional aerobic instructors who all kept the momentum

high from start to finish. Their expertly choreographed routines and engaging style ensured that participants stayed active and energised throughout the burnout session. From high-intensity cardio segments to rhythmic aerobic combinations, the instructors guided participants through a challenging yet enjoyable workout experience. They received several acclamations from those in attendance.

In addition to the physical workout, the Fun Aerobic Burnout fostered camaraderie, community spirit and a shared commitment to healthy living. Laughter, encouragement and teamwork were evident throughout the evening, making it more than just a fitness session. It was a display of a community's commitment to move together to accomplish their personal fitness goal. Participants left feeling accomplished, energised and eagerly looking forward to the next opportunity to come together in the name of health and fitness.

## Dangers of Consuming Alcohol

**According to the World Health Organization, alcohol consumption is linked to over 200 health conditions, the more alcohol consumed, the greater the risk of developing these diseases.**

The Health Education Department, St. Andrew/ St. David conducted lectures on the Dangers of Alcohol at the Manzanilla and Valencia Outreach Centres to raise awareness. Over **280** clients were reached during this campaign.

While alcohol can cause both long-term and short-term side effects, it is important to note that alcohol in any amount increases the risk of cancer. It is classified as a group one carcinogen which is the highest risk group for cancer.

Alcohol use has been directly linked to several types of cancers which include: **Liver; Breast;**

**Colon; Rectal; Mouth; Throat; Voice Box and Stomach.**

Additionally, alcohol can cause blood sugar levels to rise or fall and interferes with the release of glucose from the liver, making it riskier for persons living with diabetes to consume. Alcohol, if consumed with diabetes medication, can result in dangerously low blood sugar levels. Persons living with diabetes should never consume alcohol on an empty stomach. Alcohol also raises blood pressure, making its consumption unsuitable for persons living with high blood pressure. When alcohol is paired with blood pressure medication, it can cause dizziness, increased heart rate and increased risk of falling.

## School Carnival Outreach

**The power of music and the plasticity of the brain go together very strikingly, especially in young people.** Oliver Sacks

Recognising that music is essential in student lives as it acts as a crucial tool for cognitive development, academic enhancement and emotional well-being, the Health Education and Medical Social Work Departments held a Secondary School Carnival Programme. The sessions were held on 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> February, 2026 at the Coryal and Toco Secondary Schools.

Over **300** students participated in the dynamic sessions where music was used as a tool for self-expression. Participants listened to various songs and shared how the music influenced their emotions and behavior.

In addition to the music activities, students

received valuable information on sexual health; Sexually Transmitted Infections; alcohol and drug use; smoking and vaping; carnival safety and the consequences of risky decision-making. Interactive booths were also mounted to provide students with hands on tools to support healthier lifestyles. Reading material, lung health props and smoking cessation aids were also used to increase awareness.

Members of the Police Service were present at the Toco Secondary School and they encouraged students to stay aware of their environment and to make positive choices.

One of the main objectives of hosting these carnival programmes is to equip students with information to boost their confidence to be able to make positive choices which will enhance their life experiences.

# We Love Being Baby-Friendly- Sharing is Caring



Providing care that is compassionate and being emotional supportive during a life changing transition, is one of the many goals of the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI) Unit.

On February 10, 2026 the BFHI Unit hosted a programme in observance of Valentines Day to share with mothers, mothers to be and their families within the community and to demonstrate the depth of their commitment to service. The event which took place at the Sangre Grande Hospital Campus North Block, focused on raising awareness and promoting best practices in breastfeeding and new-born care. **41** participants had the opportunity to benefit from the interactive health education sessions. Information was shared on kangaroo care; skin-to-skin contact; positioning and attachment; maintaining milk supply and

expression and storage of breast milk. Demonstrations were conducted on Kangaroo care and peer counselling to further enhance learning and support.

A **"Grab and Go"** station which offered gently used items was also mounted. Additionally, staff and client participation were encouraged with the use of trivia games and crossword puzzles. This also assisted to test persons knowledge on breastfeeding in a fun and engaging way.

Celebrations were also held at the Satellite Dialysis Unit, Rio Claro and at the Intensive Care Unit (ICU), Sangre Grande Hospital Campus. The ICU staff wrote notes such as **"Roses are red, vitals are too. Thanks for being an awesome ICU"** to inspire and to show appreciation to one another.

# Retirement Feature



*Mr. Selwyn Beharry*

After nearly 18 years of dedicated service, Mr. Selwyn Beharry has retired from the Eastern Regional Health Authority (ERHA). Affectionately known to many as “David” or “B”. He assumed duties at the Eastern Regional Health Authority on October 17, 2008 as an **On Call Driver**. During his tenure he was assigned to several key departments, including Board Secretariat and Office of the Chief Executive Officer. However, it was in the Office of the General Manager–Human Resources that Mr. Beharry truly found his professional home. His cheerful presence became a cherished part of the daily rhythm, brightening the workplace for colleagues and visitors alike.

Beyond his friendly demeanor, he exemplified

professionalism, reliability and unwavering dedication. His contributions consistently went above and beyond his duties, proving that he was more than just a Driver/Messenger. He was also a trusted friend, a valued team member and a source of positivity for the entire Authority.

On **March 1, 2026**, he will officially close this chapter with ERHA. His extended family wishes him a retirement filled with new adventures, good health, strength, and prosperity. B, you are loved, celebrated, and will be dearly missed. Your legacy of kindness, dedication, and camaraderie will continue to inspire all who had the pleasure of knowing you.

*Happy Retirement Mr. Selwyn Beharry*

*“Caring is the Key”*



## Commendations to Staff

### **Sangre Grande Hospital Campus Blood Donation Centre**

#### **Aleisha Bruce**

The nurses in this department are the best. They were welcoming, friendly, attentive, comical, the whole package. You felt comfortable during the entire process. RN Lal had me in stitches.

#### **Jonas Blane**

They were nice I got through fast, 20 minutes and I was gone. Bless up alyuh, go and donate stop feeding them mosquitoes and save a life.

***Sent via Facebook by Aleisha Bruce & Jonas Blane  
February 2, 2026***

#### **Judy Chase**

Good day, I was recently hospitalized at The Sangre Grande Hospital Campus and I must say I was overwhelmingly pleased in general with the excellent service I witnessed, and received while being a client there. I wish to especially commend the Pharmacy Department for their excellent consistent, customer service delivery in the execution of their duties. ERHA Trinidad & Tobago. One thing though, some doctors please listen to your clients, take things as a learning experience and observe your limitations when overwhelmed, as we are aware you often are.

***Sent via Facebook by Judy Chase  
February 5, 2026***

**Let us never cease to provide quality service with compassion and dignity as we demonstrate that, "Caring is the Key."**



## Commendations to Staff

### **Avnil Trinidad**

I must say the doctors in Gynecology are very warm and easy to deal with especially Dr. Charles, she's a God sent. My favorite in front in the old casualty, is Nurse Olliverre very nice nurse. I pray every time I have clinic to see especially Dr. Charles. The rest that sees me when she's not available they're nice too but something about her she's just warm, and has a peaceful aura. She's good at her job. The doctors there and nurses they're the best in Grande.

*Sent via Facebook by Avnil Trinidad*

*February 5, 2026*

### **TrustworthyPoodle8543**

I would like to commend the ERHA health centre staff for their professional and courteous service. I visited today and I had an amazing experience with all of the nurses and doctors. I would especially like to commend Mr. Adrian Motilal from reception, he was the highlight of my positive experience.

*Sent via Facebook by TrustworthyPoodle8543*

*February 9, 2026*

**Let us never cease to provide quality service with compassion and dignity as we demonstrate that, "Caring is the Key."**



## Commendations to Staff

### **Adil Ali**

I am writing regarding the care of my father, Mr. Fazan Ali, a long-standing dialysis patient registered with the Nephro Clinic at Sangre Grande Hospital. He was hospitalized on Friday, 13th February 2026 and was warded in Surgical Ward 1A and was discharged on the night of 19th February 2026.

Firstly, I would like to express our sincere appreciation for the care my father has received. The nursing staff, particularly those assigned to Ward 1A, were extremely attentive, kind, and professional under the usual pressures of hospital work. Special mention goes to Nurse Charles and the Head Nurse on that shift, who did their utmost to try and secure my father's long-awaited Doppler ultrasound appointment for AV fistula evaluation, originally scheduled for Thursday 19th February 2026 at 9:45 a.m.; however, the appointment had to be cancelled due to him being warded.

We would also like to commend the nurses at the Sangre Grande Hospital Dialysis Unit for their excellent work in managing dialysis and ensuring that patients like my father are cared for safely and effectively. Their efforts, both at the dialysis unit and during his stay in the ward, have been exceptional and are very much appreciated.

We also wish to commend the overall facility at Sangre Grande Hospital. The wards are clean, well-maintained, and the washrooms are kept in excellent condition, which contributes greatly to patient comfort and well-being.

I would also like to acknowledge the Nephrology team, particularly Consultant Dr. Ryan Kunjal and Dr. Arnaz Maccum, for the excellent work they continue to do behind the scenes to manage my father's complex care. We understand that the doctors have busy schedules,

*Sent via Facebook by Adil Ali  
February 23, 2026*

**Let us never cease to provide quality service with compassion and dignity as we demonstrate that, "Caring is the Key."**

# FOREST FIRES

## What is a Forest Fire?:

According to the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Management (ODPM), in Trinidad and Tobago, forest fires (also commonly referred to as bushfires or wildfires) are signature events of the dry season. This hazard, which occurs annually, leaves a distinguishable mark on biological landscape, especially along roadways and hillsides.

## Causes:

Forest fires can occur naturally, however, there are incidences of natural forest fires that have been set inadvertently or deliberately by humans.

Some examples include:

- 🔥 Agricultural practices - 'slash and burn.'
- 🔥 Hunters lighting areas to chase animals out of hiding places.
- 🔥 Tossing of cigarettes carelessly.

## Impacts:

Forest fires if unattended, can have some major impacts such as:

- 🔥 **Ecosystem Damage:** Exacerbate flooding events due to its destructive effect on watershed catchments
- 🔥 **Erosion:** Reduced canopy and weakened roots can lead to erosion problems
- 🔥 **Air Pollution:** Wildfires generate smoke, harmful particulates, and greenhouse gases.
- 🔥 **Human Health:** Sinus irritation, decreased lung function, pulmonary inflammation, bronchitis and also exacerbate asthma and cardiovascular diseases.

## Prevention:

Strategies that can be used in fire prevention and mitigation include:

### Land Management:

- 🔥 Reduce the build-up of combustible materials like fallen leaves, branches and trees.
- 🔥 Deliberate creation of fire breaks i.e. strategic areas of land, cleared of vegetation, designed to inhibit the advancement of fires.
- 🔥 Only burn if you obtain a permit.

- 🔥 Be sure campfires are completely put out.

### Building Management:

- 🔥 Use of fire-resistant materials in construction e.g. concrete bricks as opposed to wood.
- 🔥 Establish fire trails around building perimeters.
- 🔥 Storage of flammable items such as fuel, wood and paint away from important structures such as dwelling spaces.

### Public Education:

- 🔥 Raising awareness of the risks, promoting alternatives to burning and enforcing fire safety regulations.

**In case of an emergency, you can contact the following numbers:**

**Fire: 990    Ambulance: 811    Police: 999    ODPM: 511    T&TEC: 800-8832**

**Your Regional Corporation Hotlines.**

Sources: <https://odpm.gov.tt/bushfire/>, <https://science.nasa.gov/earth/explore/wildfires-and-climate-change/>



February 2026

**Sangre Grande Hospital Campus**

Ojoe Road, Sangre Grande  
Tel: 228-3742/226-4744/668-2273  
Fax: 668-4368

**Brothers Road Outreach Centre**

Brothers Road  
Tabaquite  
Tel: 656-2547/340-6895

**Cumuto Outreach Centre**

Main Road  
Cumuto  
Tel: 226-1106/643-9075

**Manzanilla Outreach Centre**

Eastern Main Road  
Manzanilla  
Tel: 226-1111/668-2063

**Rio Claro Health Centre**

De Verteuil and Dougdeen Street,  
Rio Claro  
Tel: 226-1104/644-2236/644-0181

**Rio Claro Accident and Emergency**

Tel: 226-9230

**Toco Health Centre**

Paria Main Road, Toco  
Tel: 226-1576/670-8277

**Toco Accident and Emergency**

Tel: 226-9428

**Mayaro District Health Facility**

Pierreville, Mayaro  
Tel: 226-1575/630-1258/9  
Tel/Fax: 630-1257

**Coryal Outreach Centre**

Balata Hill Road and Cumuto Main Road  
Coryal  
Tel: 668-8066

**Grande Riviere Outreach Centre**

Hosang Street  
Grand Riviere  
Tel: 670-8264/385-5421

**Matelot Outreach Centre**

Main Road  
Matelot  
Tel: 670-2428/354-0052

**Sangre Grande Enhanced Health Centre**

Ojoe Road  
Sangre Grande  
Tel: 226-1102/668-2509

**Valencia Outreach Centre**

Alexander Street  
Valencia  
Tel: 226-1260/667-8197

**Biche Outreach Centre**

Canque Village  
Biche  
Tel: 280-9781/668-9053

**Cumana Outreach Centre**

Toco Main Road  
Cumana Village, Cumana  
Tel: 226-1134/670-8250

**Guayaguayare Outreach Centre**

Guayaguayare Road,  
Guayaguayare  
Tel: 226-4090/630-8777

**Matura Outreach Centre**

Toco Main Road  
Matura  
Tel: 226-1261/668-6276

**Sans Souci Outreach Centre**

Main Road  
San Souci  
Tel: 670-2382/280-8694

**Satellite Dialysis Unit,**  
Narine Ramrattan Building  
Naparima/Mayaro Road,  
Rio Claro  
Tel: 226-9353

**Submit Articles / Pictures for the ERHA's Newsletter by the 20th of each month to  
corpcomm@erha.co.tt**

Website : [www.erha.co.tt](http://www.erha.co.tt)



ERHA Trinidad & Tobago



@erhatrinidad