

ywcas change lives worldwide barbados camp for children

By Betty Tatham, World Service Council Executive Committee member

Barbados, an independent island, is farthest east of all the Caribbean Islands and it is surrounded by the Atlantic on the eastern shore. Located about 300 miles from Venezuela, it has a population of about 270,000 people.

This small country is one of the more advanced developing countries in the world with a solid economic growth rate. Barbados used to rely primarily on growing and processing sugarcane, but it now has diversified into manufacturing and tourism.

As in other nations, increasing numbers of mothers enter the workforce, and safe, healthy child care during school vacations is a critical issue for these families. The YWCA of Barbados' Vacation Day Camp serves more than 60 children per day during the school summer vacation and during the three-week vacation periods at Christmas and Easter holidays. During the rest of the year, the facilities are used by the YWCA Training Center, which offers three terms of ten-week classes in a variety of subjects to help adults prepare for employment.

"CAMP FUN-ED" activities are both educational and fun and include a daily singing and devotional program, drama and dancing, a Wednesday reading program, crafts, Junior Chef (learning to bake and prepare simple dishes and drinks) and other activities. Picnics and outings, as well as indoor and outdoor games, stress cooperation, team spirit, good manners and respect for others. Older campers help choose topics for discussion and special visitors are welcomed. A few camp scholarships based on need are usually available.

While all parents appreciate knowing that their children are well cared for in a healthy environment, a grandmother who is raising her grandchildren, ages seven and ten, by herself, said she is especially grateful. After the children's father died and their mother left Barbados, the grandmother needed to continue to work. The YWCA's vacation camp has made it possible for her to have peace of mind so she can focus on her job that provides the only income for her family.

As in many countries, summer jobs for teens are difficult to find and so the YWCA Barbados provides wonderful training opportunities for teen girls and boys who learn to work with children, prepare meals and assist with other chores. The young people receive a small stipend that helps with books, school uniforms or school supply purchases.

To learn more about how YWCAs impact lives around the globe, subscribe to 'Common Concern,' the quarterly magazine of the World YWCA. Send a cashier's check for \$32.00 (U.S.) for air mail or \$18.00 for surface mail delivery to World YWCA, 16 Ancienne Route, CH 1218, Grand Saconnex, Geneva, Switzerland. To inquire about contributing to the World YWCA, e-mail btatham@comcast.net or worldoffice@worldywca.org. The World YWCA has served women and girls and their families for more than 110 years.

About the Author, Betty Tatham:

Before joining the World Service Council in 2003, Betty Tatham directed three YWCAs for a total of 24 years (four years in Hackensack, N.J., 9 years in Salt Lake City, Utah, and 11 years in Bucks County, Pa.). Betty retired from the YWCA Bucks County to devote more time to writing children's book. She is the author of five science books for children, including the award-winning "Penguin Chick." Besides writing a monthly article on the work of YWCAs around the world, she serves on the Advisory Council of the YWCA Bucks County and she participated in several centennial celebration events of the YWCA Salt Lake City during 2006, including the Domestic Violence Shelter's 30th Birthday Celebration, a program started during her tenure there. Betty has had a strong interest in the work of the World YWCA for more than 30 years.