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**Young Entrepreneurs shine at Children’s Business Fair**

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The next generation of business tycoons made their Trinidad and Tobago debut at the country’s first ever Children’s Business Fair. The initiative, which is geared toward developing entrepreneurial skills and fostering innovative thinking, was made possible through a collaboration between bmobile and KidSpot.TnT.

At the Parish Hall of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Roman Catholic Church in Freeport, over two dozen ‘kidtrepreneurs’ launched their very own start-up businesses by providing a range of products and services to a highly enthusiastic customer base. Prior to this creative initiative, the youngsters participated in a mini-workshop and were given a chance to design their own marketing strategy to aid in the promotion of their small enterprise.

TSTT’s Manager of Corporate Responsibility and Community Relations, Anjanie Ramesar-Soom, expressed her delight with the children’s originality and imaginativeness.

“It’s very refreshing to see young people create and pursue business ideas. The ingenuity of some of these products are amazing. At bmobile, we believe that entrepreneurial skills are not merely important, but rather are vital in the 21st century. We are committed to providing opportunities that would allow children to be exposed to these skills and we’re proud to be a part of this partnership with KidSpot.TnT,” Ramesar-Soom remarked.

Children ranging from ages 5 to 18, supported by their parents, flooded the Parish Hall with an array of products such as clothing, arts and crafts, sweets, toys and books, while services such as interior designing and photography were also available from the vibrant bunch.

KidSpot.TnT provides inclusive and comprehensive educational, social and cultural activities/programmes that support the intellectual, personal and interpersonal development of children in T&T. According to head organiser, Krystal Quacoo, the Children’s Business Fair was the first of its kind and was geared at allowing kids to learn about entrepreneurship and then to put it into practice.

“We had 37 entrepreneurs and 31 businesses, because each group was allowed a maximum of three persons, so we had some partnerships. The kids decided on what they wanted to sell, came up with own little marketing strategies by advertising on social media and putting up banners. This gives them a chance to see how much work needs to be done to ensure their ‘businesses’ thrive. Becoming an entrepreneur ‘on the side’ or growing your own business provides independence and makes them more self-sufficient,” stated Quacoo.

Of the 37 budding businessmen and women at the Fair, one entrepreneur – Aliya Blake – stood out. At the booth of the 17-year old Holy Name Convent, Port-of-Spain, graduate, Blake marketed her already published book, ‘Cliffhangers’. This book was written by the youngster three years ago and is made up of a compilation of short stories she had previously done for Creative Writing at school. Blake’s book is even sold on Amazon.

“It really was my mom and one of my teachers that encouraged me to publish the stories. This book helps children enhance their Creative Writing talents at the SEA level and is a great guide to nurture your writing skills. I’m happy to be presented with this opportunity by KidSpot.TnT and bmobile to showcase my talent and also promoting ‘Cliffhangers 2’ which is due to be out in a few months,” revealed Blake.

Another standout ‘kidtrepreneur’ was Cariba Mermaids, a business that rents and sells mermaid tails and accessories. “It’s something different,” said Shellon Allicock of Cariba Mermaids. “Kids love mermaids and we provide tails for kids at parties and even mermaids to transform the event. This Children’s Business Fair is an amazing platform for young businesses to grow and gain popularity. We are grateful to be here.”

According to Quacoo, the Fair allowed kids to realise that they have an option to pursue a career that’s unique. The recognition that entrepreneurs play an important role in society was crucial. Quacoo reiterated that entrepreneurs are the persons who bear the risks, make huge sacrifices, create jobs and serve communities.

She concluded, “We’d like them to realise this from a very young age and not when they’ve completed their studies and struggling to get jobs on the market. When you become creative, work on something for yourself and earn extra money, it’s a great sense of self fulfilment. We’re just saying that this is an option.”

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