

A building of hope

– The National Youth Centre opens its doors

BY FAIZOOL DEO

In the crowd he mingled like any other. There was no distinction; all the young people were excited about the opening of the Youth Centre. For him though it was not just seen as a social interaction centre, but one of hope.

Albert (not his real name), still a teen, has had a torrid life to date. At an early age he endured the loss of his parents: one ripped away by a much feared disease the other by an automobile accident.

The young TC Islander now lives with a foster parent in a humble setting in Providenciales. His ambitions have not dwindled, and despite still being a student he has already mapped out his path. He wants to become an architect.

He claims that the Youth Centre is a place where he can "study and be a youth."

Further probing brings out more. He has embraced the centre since construction started. "I see people here taking care of you and loving you like a family would."

CURTAINS UP

A hour later at the official opening ceremony, Director Megan O'Reilly acknowledges all who believed in the dream. Emotionally charged herself, O'Reilly told the audience, which included a number of dignitaries, including government officials, that the centre is an avenue of hope: pointing to it making a difference in the entire country.

Numerous other speakers grace the



The cake of success: Director Megan O'Reilly, fourth from left, and the junior directors cut the symbolic cake to indicate the successful opening of the centre.

stage; they spoke of having a positive start, of promoting the arts and sport. The Minister of Home Affairs Hon. Galmo Williams said that the centre will make a difference in "all of our lives". He said that the next step will be to build a basketball court, a tennis court and hopefully include

a recording studio.

Minister of Education Hon. Carlton Mills said that the centre "will give our young people a sense of focus." To him the centre is "a model for Turks and Caicos, a model for the entire Caribbean."

A MARVEL

The actual building is a marvel, there are 10 rooms engulfed in a flower garden. These include the junior area, which a board of junior directors will use to make decisions; the game room, not much time I was told will be spent here; the computer room and the study and quiet rooms, for both male and female students.

There is also a room designated to the Rap Port organisation where focus will be

on educating people on HIV/AIDS, self-esteem issues and counselling.

Along with the speeches there were a number of moving pieces, including melodious songs and rather youthful dances.

The family oriented nature that Albert related to was all, but glaring. The post opening session was very interactive and O'Reilly and the junior directors, who were tasked with hosting the evening and conducting the tour sessions, lobbied as peers.

With a strong structure, both physical and intellectual already in place, the Youth Centre should fulfil its mandate and make the hopes of young people like Albert a reality.



The decision makers: the junior directors who will be tasked with making some of the important decisions at the centre.



Fun time: Some of the young people were having a ball of a time in the play room.