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CANTO Seeks to Change Girls' Views on ICT



Team Mighty Information Communication Tech (MIC-T) V. Tongson, K. Ali, S. Francis:- Tablets sponsored by Blink-Bmobile

“You have two essential powers - the power within and the power of ICT. Use the power within to develop your attitudes and discipline, your dreams and aspirations, and use the power of ICT to help you realize these dreams. You are living in exciting times and if you invest time and work in developing these two powers you will create magic in your life...” Mrs. Teresa Wankin, Acting Secretary General of CANTO delivered these powerful and impactful words in her address to over 130 young ladies at the Bishop Centenary College in Trinidad & Tobago; April 28th, 2016.

These words set the stage for the International Annual Girls in ICT Day celebrations observed annually on the 4th Thursday in April. The initiative is backed by International Telecommunication Union (ITU) member states to create a global environment that empowers and encourages girls and young women to consider careers in the burgeoning field of



information and communication technologies (ICTs). The theme for 2016 was: **“Expanding Horizons Changing Attitudes”**.

According to ITU since 2011, International Girls in ICT Day has been celebrated in 150 countries around the world with more than 5,300 events and participation of over 177,000 girls and young women. CANTO is proud to be a part of spreading the message of changing the perspective and attitudes of girls and women about in ICT and the limitless opportunities that lie within ICT.

The event was hosted by CANTO on the 28th of April, and included a forum, mini exhibition and ICT Business competition.

The interactive forum featured dynamic presenters from the private and public sector. Presenters provided students with an overview of their journey to their respective ICT careers. Reference was also made to regional and other international women who have made significant achievements in ICTs. Students got the opportunity to explore the different facets of ICT including potential careers in an area that is seemingly dominated by men. Some of the key points from the proceedings of the workshop highlighted by the presenters were:

- Senior positions in jobs in ICT sector for women are attainable and feasible
- ICT is not only about technology but access to it
- Women in senior positions can generate more revenue to the company
- Education is key to success in the ICT sector
- Empowered girls of today can be the forerunners in the ICT sector tomorrow
- Self-employment in ICT is also an option

Ms Vydia Bhagan of CANTO was the M.C. of the event. Opening remarks were delivered by: Mrs. Yvonne Pinder, Principal of Bishop’s Centenary College; Mrs. Teresa Wankin, Acting Secretary General of CANTO and Mr. Julian Wilkins, Chairman of CANTO.

Mr. Julian Wilkins Chairman of CANTO, in his address, reminded the young ladies of the impact women have on the ICT sector: “My CANTO Board of Directors has nine Directors; five of which are women; relatively young women who work for various Telecommunications companies in the Caribbean. Women are taking prominent ICT positions but we need to see more young women and girls involved”.

Career advice and motivational inputs were offered in the Women in Action segment by: Ms Janelle Pascal, FLOW Trinidad & Tobago; Ms. Hadassah Noray, HYT Solutions; Ms. Jacqueline Morris Soroptimist International – POS; Ms. Lisa Wharwood, University of Trinidad & Tobago; Ms Lisette Maxime - Hernandez, Microsoft TT; and Ms. Rachel Rullow of IGovTT.

The featured speaker of the event was Ms. Brigitte Hyacinth a leadership expert and motivational Speaker. She is the Founder and Director of MBA Caribbean Organisation, a firm she established in 2008 which specializes in seminars and workshops in leadership, management and education. She is the author of “The Edge of Leadership: A Leader's Handbook for Success”. An internationally acclaimed leadership guru, Brigitte is sought out by CEO’S all over the world for her leadership insights. She has provided one on one coaching sessions to many top level executives around the globe. Her parting words to the girls were ‘Believe in yourself and don’t give up’.

The students got an opportunity to explore ICT products and services exhibited by a few of the sponsors. Students also participated in numerous questions and answer segments by the presenters and were rewarded with tokens for their contributions.

In the competition segment, students were asked to create an ICT related business that would benefit women and/or girls in ICTs. The winners were as follows:

First Place - Team *Mighty Information Communication Tech (MIC-T)* Virginia Tongson, Karissa Ali, Shervelle Francis:- Tablets sponsored by Blink-Bmobile

Second place – Team *Women and Girls in Technology (WAGIT TAB LTD)*; Tyanna McEachnie, Debra Daniel, Olisha Wilson:- Hampers sponsored by Nestle

Third Place: Team *Technological Aspiration Source (TAS LTD)*; Shenessa Findlay Maule, Amber Robero, John, Tinisha Haynes:- Smart Phones sponsored by Huawei and KCL Capital Market Brokers Ltd

The *Girls in ICT Forum, Exhibition and ICT Business Competition* were made possible by the following partners and sponsors: FLOW, TSTT (Blink -Bmobile), Huawei, University of Trinidad & Tobago (UTT), Pure Events Ltd., Nestle, Bermudez, Premier Party Rentals, Double X Workshop, Office Authority, Very Exciting Things, Soroptimist International POS, iGovTT, KCL Capital Market Brokers Ltd. and Microsoft Trinidad & Tobago

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CANTO is recognized as the leading trade association of the ICT sector for shaping information and communication in the Caribbean. Founded in 1985 as a non-profit association of 8 telephone operating companies, CANTO has now grown to over 125 members in more than 35 countries. A Board of Directors appointed by the membership directs policy of the Association. This strategy is executed by the staff of a permanent Secretariat based in Trinidad and Tobago.