



CALLS:
Centre Where Adults Learn to Love and Serve

In Dominica young people account for a majority of the country's population. These youth are confronted with a significant lack of employment opportunities and job prospects. The lure of quick money from the drug trade is strong. Dogged by a poor self image, young people are easy targets for those who would exploit them in any number of ways.



The Centre (Credit: CALLS)

The Centre where Adolescents Learn to Love and Serve (CALLS) has, since its inception in 1995, changed the lives of hundreds of Dominicans. CALLS offers transformative programs for at-risk adolescents, facilitating the development of these youths into responsible, well-rounded individuals and empowering them to live successful lives through the acquisition of new skills, a strong work ethic and an aptitude for entrepreneurship and service. (CALLS site) The Centre's programs focus on practical skills for life and work.

CALLS operates an Early Childhood Development Centre (for the working poor of the community), a Craft and Woodworking Outlet, a Laundry and a farm at the One Mile Agricultural Station - all places where students learn in-demand skills for child-care and education, crafting, woodworking, commercial cleaning, agriculture and fish handling and processing. CALLS provides the Caribbean Certificate of Secondary Level Competence (CCSLC) in English, and many graduates find gainful employment in Dominica and around the world. CALLS is also a registered NGO (non-governmental organization) and a registered not-for-profit organization in Dominica.



Learning to make furniture (Credit: CALLS)



Learning to process fish (Credit: CALLS)



Fresh from the Agricultural Centre (Credit: CALLS)



Background

In 1994 Sister Regina Leiba, SJC, a woman of faith, leadership, and vision, saw the need to educate young persons 'at risk' between the ages of 16 to 22 in the northern region of Dominica who through no fault of their own had not completed their education. She shaped her vision into reality and soon CALLS welcomed its first class of trainees on a new and positive life path. Since then, CALLS has served as a safety net for well over 600 hundred youth. The program promotes 'turning around' and opting for "another chance" for a holistic spirituality, a responsible lifestyle, social adjustment, and education suited to individual needs and career plans.



Staff and Students at CALLS

At the invitation of the Christian Brothers who were already involved with CALLS, in 2009 our Presentation Sisters of Newfoundland and Labrador (at first, Sr Betty Rae Lee, Sr Sylvia Staples and Associate Jean M O'Neill) began their ministry at CALLS through their volunteer service and also through financial support. Despite the daily stresses from inadequate resources on every level, we are proud of the young people who have come to CALLS for a second chance, having experienced difficult and often extremely violent situations within their homes and communities.



Sister Annmary on Opening Day with first Furniture Making Cohort.

Our staff members work very hard because they are convinced that the CALLS model (and the vision and values on which it is based) is successful in creating a meaningful future for our youth and in finding non-violent solutions to the escalating social conflict that is marring the peace of this beautiful island. Because we

value our toddlers and our youth, we continue to provide loving care and proper education so that they too can 'reach for the stars' and make a positive contribution within their families, their communities and the wonderful country of Dominica.

In 2017 Dominica was traumatized and devastated by Hurricane Maria. At the same time, key personnel at CALLS were reaching the conclusion of their working lives. So, in 2018, our NL Presentation Sisters appealed for



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volunteers from across our world-wide Congregation to continue the mission in Dominica and our Congregational Leadership Team encouraged mobility for mission. Nano's lantern flame was passed from CALLS' original Director, 80-year-old Jamaican Mrs. Olivia Douglas, Sister Marie Roche and Associate Jean O'Neill to a new generation.



Our Sisters in India and Africa answered the call. Sr. Annmary Andrews (L) from North India arrived December 2018. November 2019 Sr. Elsa Mutathu came as part of her sabbatical for a month to offer support. November 2019 Sr. Mary Therese Raphael (R) arrived from South India and stayed until November 1, 2022. Sr. Lynette Rodrigues (C) came for 2 years February 2020 from the Africa Unit. As of 2022, Sr. Annmary continues to serve at CALLS.

Our Sisters live in Salisbury in a rented house, where we do our own chores and teach each other how to prepare dishes from our various native cuisines. In front of our house, we have the western coastal highway and at the back we have the Caribbean Sea with a beautiful view of the ocean. The church is just five minutes' walking distance away. We travel to Portsmouth, 25 km from Salisbury, for our ministry at CALLS.

Our mission now is evolving towards the vision of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGS). **“Peace and Prosperity for People and Planet in Partnership”** will focus on sustainability of the CALLS program in partnership with other Partners in Development in Dominica. As Presentation Sisters in the mission now, we are responsible for administration of the CALLS program. We work as volunteers, teaching English and computer skills, giving individual attention to trainees and supporting the staff in their work. We also engage in coordination of projects, renovating places damaged by Hurricane Maria and designing programs that will benefit the trainees and the wider community of Portsmouth.

This enables implementation of the SDGs to keep the environment (ocean) clean from pollution. While learning skills for sustainable fishing and boat maintenance, the students also learn to manage oil waste and implement sustainable agricultural practices. Additionally, many students travel away from the political unrest and natural calamities of Haiti to CALLS in order to complete their education, broadening the benefit of this mission throughout the Caribbean.

Our Sisters have taught and ministered for over 13 years at CALLS and continue to commit to give wholeheartedly of their time, energy and other gifts and resources for the youth of Dominica and their families.

~ With thanks to our Sisters in Dominica in helping put together this Reflection...

Read more in the [October 2014 article](#), **“CALLS ‘transforming’ the lives of young people”** as posted in Da Vibes – The Caribbean News Portal in celebration of the 20th Anniversary of CALLS.