

# PROJECT ACTION

**Mission Statement: To provide free transportation support program for Seniors.**

**Registered Charity #561**

**Donations can be made online at Butterfield Bank, account #20006060282255100.**

The late Judith Stewart and I co-founded Project Action about some 18 years ago. We were afternoon readers at the St. George Rest Home. The matron called me concerned that there was an approaching storm coming to Bermuda and she asking if my husband, Kim Swan who was at the time the Golf Professional at the St. George's Golf Club, would be able to lend her some golf carts to take the seniors down the hill. I was extremely perplexed at this request because the open golf carts would not have provided much protection in the event of a storm. In subsequent chats with her, Judith and I decided to help raise funds to purchase a vehicle for the rest home. We started meeting on a weekly basis before going to the rest home, at Swizzle Inn in Bailey's bay to plan how we would get the funds for the purchase of a vehicle. As a matter of fact, our first donation was from a customer at Swizzle Inn, who seemed to have had 'some' libations for lunch, came over and asked what were we doing and when we shared what we were planning, he went into his pocket and gave us all he had in his pocket, which was \$7.00 and wished us well...

In a meeting with the late Sir John Plowman, Kim shared that Judith and I were fundraising to buy a vehicle for the St George's Rest home. He offered to help us raise awareness for the cause but before he would totally commit, said we needed to do some homework. He felt the vehicle would be an excellent additional transportation for Seniors in the Island's rest homes, but it should be used for more

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than one rest home. Our task was to visit every rest home on island and see what their transportation needs were and if they would utilize this sort of service for their residents. We needed to find out how many walkers and how many wheel chair users were in the homes and report back to him. We took about a month and went back to him with the stats we had gathered. He said he was surprised, as he didn't expect us to come back.

It was Christmas of 1999 and Sir John Plowman called and said that he had a Christmas gift for us, girls. We thought at best, it may be a box of chocolates. To our surprised he wanted us to meet a Mr. David Barber. He told us David had called him as he saw that his wish for the upcoming millennium, was to raise monies for a bus for seniors. He scheduled a meeting with the four of us and asked that we bring the statistics we had gathered.

In the middle of that meeting, David stopped me in the midst of my presentation and said "how much money do you need." I said, the vehicle cost approximately \$80,000 each. Shockingly David pull out his check book, and wrote us a cheque for \$160,000. Flabbergasted we profusely thank them both and left shortly after. We sat in Sir John's driveway for some time in awe of what had just happened. To be honest, we didn't know where to start, as we thought it would take years to raise the funds.

We decided to have a meeting with my neighbour Mr. Herman Baisden, who at the time was the director at PTB. The information Mr .Baisden shared was extremely valuable. He suggested that we purchase one vehicle first, get that one up and running then purchase the 2<sup>nd</sup> one.

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Our first vehicle arrived and it was light blue and dark blue. In ordering, we really didn't notice the colour. Everyone thought it was on purpose so our 2<sup>nd</sup> vehicle we painted red and blue, to comfort those up in the West end.

We started the service out of the Centre of Philanthropy office in Hamilton. It was a charity to charity sharing endeavour. Our volunteers, including Judith, Myra Durrant, Mrs. Myrtle Edness. Mrs. Mills and myself provided receptionist duties for the Centre of Philanthropy in exchange for a desk and phone for Project Action clients to call and for us to make scheduling. Unfortunately, the Centre moved and grew and we were out on our own.

We schedule rides to all the rest homes on island, giving the homes a minimum of two rides per month. Initially with just the blue bus service, Project Action was fortunate to operate with only volunteers. Our dedicated volunteer bus drivers includes the late Raul Clementino, Rev. Rodney Grimes, Ms. Glenda Maduro and others who gave graciously of their time to give our seniors a drive out from the monotony routine of their rest home lives.

We found affordable office space in St. George and rented a small office on Rose Hill from the Corporation of St. George, where are at still presently located. The office is managed by retired school teacher, Mrs. Rose Douglas. The office is used for various things, including managing the buses, helping seniors with photocopying and other uses.

We were inundated with calls for individual rides. Many sad calls came from family members who could not get their loved ones to their medical appointments. Many children and relatives called asking for assistance saying they could not take any more time off from work and really was in need of this type of transportation for their elderly love ones.

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The Late F. John Barritt was on our board at this time and we decided to order the second bus and designated that bus to taking on individuals. This was to be a door to door service. In providing this essentially needed service we also recognized that we needed to hire a driver. Up until this time we operated strictly with only volunteers. We didn't know it at the time, but we really hit the jackpot when we hired Ernest DeGrilla aka Shooby, who came highly recommended to us. He's been a God send for so many and gets very attached to his passengers. Many times he calls sharing that he opened up the RG and there was a picture of one of his passengers. Many times he was even more saddened by the fact relatives did not see the need in informing him before reading the obituary. Shooby was paid as a part time employee but he worked diligently and later than was expected of him.

Project Action has provided thousands of rides to thousands of people over the years. We have taken Seniors to Cup Match, Christmas Boat parades and to St. George's and Dockyard for drive outs.

We were fortunate to received funding from various corporate sponsors and would like to make special mention of Rubis for providing free diesel for over 16 years and truly without this major contribution the wheels would of stopped turning long before now.

Our former major sponsor Validus Re, we thank you. We also thank Equator Re, whose donation kept the wheels turning for the last year.

This is where the rubber meets the road. We cannot afford to keep the wheels running without any funds. Our appeal today is to seek funding from Corporate Bermuda, The Bermuda government and the entire Bermuda community.

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If you would like for us to continue providing free transportation for Seniors and the physically challenged we need your financial support. We no longer have the blue bus as we loaned it to Summerhaven in good faith and running and in good condition and was told last year that it was not repairable and it would have to be sold for parts, which they have done. Our present vehicle needs parts; a rotar etc. and the parts alone are in excess of \$3,000 exclusive of labour.

Seniors and the Physically Challenged rely on Project Action for this service – our dialysis patients to their doctors' appointments. Recently Keith Simmons who works in the Government Senior office relied on the Project Action vehicle to get him to work as his own vehicle was in the garage for repairs.

We know that the ongoing recession affected local charities, especially the grassroots ones are suffering as we ride under the bigger charity radars. But I can honestly share that Project Action has filled transportation gaps for Seniors Island wide. The dialysis passengers are not out for a joy ride, they need those weekly treatments, without dialysis treatments, death is imminent.

When we first started, some said it wasn't a viable project. When we did get it off and running others shared they give us two years and we were not sustainable, giving free services to seniors and the physically challenged – Corporate Bermuda, Bermuda Government, Bermuda Community we need you to step up to the wicket. Years ago when Project Action was faced with closure, having just completed a consultancy project I donated \$10,000 dollars that kept the service in operation. As our last option, we are making a last ditch appeal to the community.

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What do we need?

1. For an immediate band aid remedy, we need to raise \$10,000 by July 15<sup>th</sup>, 2016 to repair the vehicle and pay our outstanding obligations. If not, the charity will be forced to shut down permanently.
2. We need commitment for additional donations. Our annual budget is \$110,000.
3. We need a new vehicle at a cost of approximately \$65,000.

The onus has to be on all the stakeholders – Corporate Bermuda, Bermuda Government and the community at large to make the decision whether we continue to give the seniors who don't live near a bus stop, can't afford taxi fare, don't have relatives to assist them to get to their medical appointments etc., and rely on Project Action for their free mode of transportation.

Ball is in your court to keep the wheels turning. We started eighteen years ago with \$7.00 and amount will help.

Thank you,

on behalf of PROJECT ACTION

Cindy Swan  
535-9801  
organize@logic.bm

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