



For the Kids

WHEN WE LAST CHECKED IN ON MASTER SPAS' PLANS TO BUILD A SCHOOL IN JAMAICA, THEY WERE JUST THAT: PLANS.

Three years later, the NAZ Children's Center in Montego Bay has opened its doors — and answered lots of prayers.

At a 2010 Master Spas dealer meeting in Jamaica, some from the company's management team stopped by a local private school to distribute much-needed supplies.

"What tears me up each time I think of it is, I had never contemplated for a moment closing down," says Alixann Narcisse-Campbell, the founder and principle at NAZ Children's Center. "But the very month before they came was the hardest month I can remember the school ever having."

A group of young students, primarily girls, are shown in profile, facing left. They are wearing blue school uniforms with a logo on the chest. Many of the girls have their hair styled in braids with various colorful accessories like beads and bows. They are all clapping their hands, suggesting they are participating in a school activity or performance. The background is slightly blurred, showing other students and a yellow wall.

Master
Spas
and its
dealers
help a
Jamaican
school
grow and
thrive.



Narcisse-Campbell began her teaching career at another private school on the island, but she became frustrated with how the school detected special needs in its students, and says she “couldn’t get enough done in a day.” She left the school and started tutoring a child in the evenings while his parents worked. Word of her success with that student spread, and soon she was running an after-school program for a few more children. Before she knew it, Narcisse-Campbell was running a full-day school out of her home for 12 children; an after-school program; and at night she would teach adults to read. By the time Master Spas came into the picture, the NAZ Children’s Center had moved to a small building, which housed 35 students and seven team members.

Sherry Lauter, wife of Master Spas’ CEO Bob Lauter and a teacher for 15 years, was there for that first visit and recalls the condition of the school.

“They were on top of each other,” Sherry says. “These rooms didn’t even have walls up to the ceiling. To be heard over another classroom right next door or a special-needs classroom where kids are screaming or acting out sometimes, I thought, ‘How do they do that? I used to complain about 26 kids in my classroom.’”

Sherry and Narcisse-Campbell had a connection from the start. Narcisse-Campbell, who initially was intimidated by Bob Lauter’s crossed arms, found comfort in Sherry.

“I didn’t know that was his thinking face,” Narcisse-Campbell says now. “I just thought he was so bored. When they were leaving, Sherry said to me, ‘This isn’t the end. We want to do something.’ She had tears in her eyes.”

Sherry’s reaction may have been the most transparent, but on the bus ride back to the resort, the Master Spas group couldn’t stop talking about what they could do for the school.

But even with Sherry’s words, Narcisse-Campbell hesitated when Bob asked her via email what Master Spas could do to help. “The person who had been with me the longest, it took her to prompt me to send that email,” Narcisse-Campbell says. Unbeknownst to her, that employee, along with another, had been praying fervently for the state of the school. Even though Narcisse-Campbell hadn’t said much about it, her coworkers knew there were grave financial problems. “She stood right behind me and watched me type the email,” Narcisse-Campbell says. “She said, ‘Press send. You need to ask for help.’”

“My first response was like, ‘What? We can’t build a school. Are you crazy?’” Bob Lauter remembers. But the wheels started turning, and he realized that with the help of the Master Spas



THE ENTRYWAY
and courtyard
of the NAZ
Children’s Center
during construction.



**Alixann
Narcisse-Campbell**
FOUNDER & PRINCIPAL
NAZ CHILDREN’S CENTER





“When they were leaving, Sherry said to me, ‘This isn’t the end. We want to do something.’ She had tears in her eyes.” – ALIXANN NARCISSE-CAMPBELL



dealers and some key Jamaican donations, they could make it happen.

Despite a difficult economy, the dealers were happy to participate; Master Spas’ board agreed to send support as well. For every swim spa a dealer sold, the dealer would give \$25, which Master Spas matched.

“You had a bunch of people doing a small amount, and pretty soon you’ve got something significant,” Lauter says.

Finding the Jamaican support necessary was a puzzling dilemma since Master Spas didn’t have an apparent connection to the island other than holding dealer meetings there. But Lauter felt it was key to the school’s long-term success.

“If the Jamaican businesses don’t see the value in it, why should we do it?” he says.

The pieces of that puzzle fell into place through a series of unlikely connections and relationships: The parent of an NAZ student put them in touch with Rose Hall Development, the owners of the Ritz-Carlton. An executive from Rose Hall knew of Lauter’s daughter from her days playing soccer for the University of Tennessee, where he served on the board of trustees. Rose Hall ended up donating the land where the school was built.

Another big contributor was Digicell, the largest telecommunications company in the Caribbean. In addition to donating



STUDENTS AND STAFF celebrate at the first day of school in the new building. Narcisse-Campbell says the children have coined a new word: "naztastic."



to the school's building, the company has also given the school a grant to bring smart technology into the classroom. The Spanish-Jamaican Foundation donated the classroom furniture as well as some technology. The Harvard-educated, Jamaican architect donated all the design and drawings.

"It's great to see the level of excitement there in the business community," Bob Lauter says. "It's fun to have started a project and bring it to completion."

The new building, which officially opened September 2, features five classrooms, which each have their own restroom with a shower; an open-air pavilion that will also serve as a fine-arts center; a playground; and — Narcisse-Campbell and Sherry Lauter's favorite — a library/computer lab.

What makes NAZ stand out among other private schools in Jamaica is its approach to mixed-ability education. Average and above-average learners are taught in the same classrooms as special-needs students and students whose first language isn't English. NAZ is also committed to keeping its tuition low enough that students from all socioeconomic backgrounds can attend. Lauter says Master Spas was sensitive to that as it worked on the project, setting aside funds to help support

the upkeep, maintenance and operations so the new building wouldn't become a burden.

More projects are in the works to further improve the school. A wall is being installed at the front gate; landscaping needs to be completed; and Master Spas is sending over one of its commercial Michael Phelps Swim Spas.

"Most of these kids don't have access to a pool, and you're not going to learn to swim in the ocean," Bob Lauter says. "Honestly, a lot of the Jamaican kids are afraid of the ocean because they don't know how to swim."

In addition to the swim spa, Cathy Bennett — who taught Michael Phelps to swim as a child and continues to teach children how to swim at his foundation — has agreed to come and instruct the NAZ staff how to teach children to swim.

"Now that we have a facility built and it is first-class, we can not take this for granted," Narcisse-Campbell says. "We don't get that option. We now have to earn this."

She dreams of the center becoming a hub for teacher training and testing, and one day growing to have a location on the other side of the island so they can reach more children. ■

Dealers

HOW DID MASTER SPAS' DEALERS FEEL ABOUT CONTRIBUTING MONEY — DURING A TOUGH DOWNTURN, NO LESS — TO A SCHOOL IN ANOTHER COUNTRY?

"I was more than willing to give the amount they asked," says Debbie Goch, co-owner of Niagara Hot Tub in St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada. During one of Master Spas' APEX dealers meetings on the island, Goch visited the school for its groundbreaking. The children put on a performance for the dealers, and everyone enjoyed a picnic together.

"It was heartwarming," Goch says. "I should've brought Kleenex. It was touching to see how the children interacted with their teachers. What we gave is a small token from our pocket, but it means so much."

And the fundraising hasn't stopped. At a dealer meeting in Cancun this past November, dealers purchased jewelry that the NAZ staff and parents made, raising an additional \$10,000.

