

Caring Entrepreneurship: A Model For Sustainable Community-based Tourism in St. Lucia

Ramping Up Community-based Tourism in Rural St Lucia Starting With Elementary School Students and Visitor Engagement and Then Building Outwards From There

CASTRIES, LC, SAINT LUCIA, August 10, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- A few years ago award winning [St Lucia photographer](#) Kirk Elliott got invited to a rural community in Saint Lucia to help it develop a sense of excellence in its tourism offering after his [St Lucia Photo Tour](#) won its first TripAdvisor

Certificate of Excellence. Elliott was blown away by the tremendous potential of their tourism product. However, he couldn't help lamenting that residents simply didn't see its potential and were thus content to maintain the status quo.

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Kirk Elliott

In grappling with the conundrum of how best to effect positive and lasting change Elliott came to the realization that rural communities are largely ill-equipped to successfully manage and operate tourism enterprises. This led him to an idea he dubbed “Caring Entrepreneurship”.

Defining Caring Entrepreneurship

In the context of tourism Elliott defines the Caring Entrepreneur as someone who understands the business

of tourism. The entrepreneur brings this expertise to the mutual benefit of both the community and his/her enterprise and in the process nurtures and empowers the community in tourism excellence.



Community Meeting in Rural St Lucia

To be successful the business arrangement must be based on mutual respect and trust. The entrepreneur must truly care about the community rather than exclusively about his/her bottom line. In turn the community must recognize and appreciate the caring entrepreneur's value. This synergy is the foundation for an outcome that yields results that far exceed the sum of the community's and the entrepreneur's individual efforts.

"I will be the first to state that this notion of caring entrepreneurship is a counter-intuitive approach to success. However, from inception it was clear to me that this novel approach was an effective way of nurturing long-term success in community-based sustainable tourism development" Elliott explained when asked why would an entrepreneur sacrifice profit just to help a poor rural community.

Testing The Theory of Caring Entrepreneurship

After multiple false starts Elliott finally got the opportunity to test his theory in a different community after [@CoxTravelAdventures](#) of Danbury Connecticut, USA, outfitted an entire kindergarten class with an assortment of school supplies at the start of the 2022 school year.

The school supplies were donated to the Dugard Combined School in Choiseul, Saint Lucia. While Dugard is a rural community deep in the heart of Saint Lucia, whatsoever the school may have missed due to its remoteness it more than made up for with heart and soul. From the principal and teachers, to the students, to the school's caretaker staff, they all operate like one big family and their love and caring comes shining through.

"From my initial telephone conversation with Mr. Elliott I felt like my prayers had been answered, as just the week before I had prayed that our small rural community school with limited resources would somehow gain greater visibility. Then seemingly out of the blue there was Mr. Elliott lending a helping hand and speaking of wanting to develop a long-term relationship with



Cox Travel Adventures donate back to school supplies to a kindergarten class in St. Lucia



Tourists Posing with Grade 5 Students of the Dugard Combined School in Choiseul, Saint Lucia

our school”, stated school principal Mrs. Tessa Charles-Calderon when asked about Elliott’s support for the school.

Connecting Young Students With Tourism

Since the post pandemic return of tourism Elliott has been taking patrons of his Private St Lucia Experiences to the Dugard Combined School where they get to engage with students first hand. Elliott invites his clients to bring over school supplies based on the needs of the school, and the general consensus of visitors is that their engagement with the students has been a highlight of their Saint Lucia vacation.

For the students – they have come to appreciate tourists as people just like themselves rather than as some abstract term they hear about on the radio or see on television newscasts.

What’s Next For The Dugard Combined School

Students at the school have said they would love to have a proper playground at their school and the principal and teachers consider this an excellent idea that will teach the children about caring and sharing, among other things.

Elliott has engaged many of his professional friends to lend a helping hand to the Dugard Combined School’s Playground Project. From an engineer who has assessed the required earth works, to an architect who has produced architectural renderings for the playground, just about everyone Elliott has reached out to has lent their support and even gone way beyond his wildest expectations.

“The overwhelming support of everyone I have reached out to has emboldened me to invite both the teachers and the students to dream big scary dreams and then together let’s go out and make those dreams come through!” Elliott passionately commented when asked his thoughts on this playground project and beyond.

During the 2022/23 school year Elliott worked with the school to complete Phase 1 of the Playground Project in the form of the painting of educational games in the schoolyard. Not to let an opportunity go to waste, the school incorporated the games painting project into students’ School Based Assessment (SBA). This SBA is a practical activity students must successfully complete in order to graduate and gain admission to a secondary school.

From the video below of the official launch of the games it is clear that the students’ efforts were well received.

Creating an International Benchmark of Sustainable Community-based Tourism in Small Island Developing States (SIDS)

When Elliott embarked on this journey of seeking to empower a rural community little could he have imagined where the journey would lead. In the process of understanding and overcoming the obstacles he encountered he has come to realize that those we consider rural poor enjoy a richness of life and living that remains largely unrecognized.

"I am super excited about this idea of Caring Entrepreneurship and my goal is to see this community engagement starting with the Dugard Combined School project manifest into an International Benchmark of Sustainable Community-based Tourism in Small Island Developing States" said Elliott when asked what was the overall outcome he envisions.

...and at the rate at which this intervention is progressing he just might be on to something.

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