From our family to yours
Merry Christmas
Giving back this Christmas

How can you give back to the community this Christmas?

Covid-19 has had a major impact on all our lives, and this Christmas season may be very different from the rest. Lots of families are currently going through some very hard times, especially as it relates to their finances. Many persons in the community are trying to make a difference in the lives of those most affected, and I would like to highlight a particular individual who has put together a great cause.

Young entrepreneur, Mr. Xavier Nicholas (aka Mr. Fries), has organized a toy- and food-drive to aid those in need this Christmas. The toy- and food-drive has been ongoing since November 24 and ends on December 22. Mr. Fries thinks giving back to the community will be a great opportunity this Christmas.

- **What items would you like others to donate to your toy- and food-drive?**

Items can vary from non-perishable food items (which will be used to create food baskets for the families) to unwrapped, new toys for the kids. These items will be given to those who are in need this holiday season. I’ve had parents who have already contact me about persons who could benefit most from this drive and persons whose family members have lost their jobs and aren’t able to provide for their family this Christmas.

- **What made you want to do this toy- and food-drive?**

COVID-19 has affected so many persons financially, due to job-loss and salary-reductions, which have left many families struggling to make ends meet. I saw it as a great opportunity for me to step in and come up with a plan, which will not only put smiles on faces, but also help out some families, who may not be able to enjoy the holidays as they traditionally do every year.

- **Will the toy- and food-drive be an annual event?**

Seeing that it is my first year as a young entrepreneur, and this is my first ever toy- and food-drive, I do see it becoming something that’s done annually. My aim would be to make it even bigger in the years to come. I believe with great support from everyone, we can make things happen. So I am encouraging one and all to do something good for someone else this Christmas season — be it big or small.

**Create A Christmas Moment THIS YEAR**

and joy to families. I know this year hasn’t been the best year for everyone, and I believe with the assistance of persons willing to donate to this drive, we can show how united we are as one people on our little island by helping each other out.

Overall, the intention of this drive is to be able to bring some Christmas joy to kids and families who are in need this holiday season. Other organizations, such as K1 Britannia Foundation, annually organizes a Christmas angels project, which provides gifts to foster children and children under protective custody. We as teenagers can also find ways to help the community. Be it the littlest thing, we can try our best to assist friends, family and the elderly.

Christmas is the season of giving. The great acts of love are done by those who are habitually performing small acts of kindness. Even if you read this after December 22, STILL GIVE!

Dear teen Times:

During the past quarantine, I gained a few extra pounds and due to that I’m starting to feel insecure about my body. I no longer want to go places because most of my clothes don’t fit me anymore. I’ve always been an active teen, so this is all new to me. Any advice on how I can regain my confidence?

—Trying to regain confidence

Dear Trying to regain confidence:

The rule in life is: self-love is the best love. You have to love yourself for who you are. Love yourself, girl! Or nobody will. So what if you gained weight? So did the rest of the world. What you can do is start exercising and eat healthily to get to your goal weight. Our minds are our biggest critics. Therefore, you can also start saying daily affirmations to help boost your self-esteem.
Akilah Meulens - Full steam ahead!

If you know Teen Times, you know we like to shine the spotlight on our best and brightest academics—young adults who have achieved a large measure of academic success already, and are on their way to achieving their ultimate goal of cementing their future in their field of study. Enter Akilah Meulens—a St. Martiner “tru and tru”!

Akilah WILL BE our next dentist on sweet SXM. We think she is awesome—not just for her dedication to her studies, but also how she managed to combine sports with her studies. We are firm believers that young people excel when there is a combination of extracurricular activities with academics. So we wanted you to get to know Akilah since she will soon be a household name.

1. Tell us about Akilah Meulens.
I am a 25-year-old St. Martiner, born and raised. I attended MAC primary school and St. Dominic High School and left the island at the age of 17 to pursue my tertiary education in New York. I am currently working to pursue my tertiary education in the United States.

2. Where did you attend college/university and what field did you major in?
I spent my first two years at Monroe College pursuing my degree in Medical Assisting. I then transferred to Baruch College in New York City where I received my degree in Biological Sciences (pre-dental). I then enrolled in Howard University’s College of Dentistry to pursue my Doctor of Dental Surgery degree, which is currently on pause due to COVID.

3. Is this a field you always wanted to build a future in?
I always knew that I wanted to pursue a career in healthcare because I wanted to serve others. I figured if I could serve while doing something I love, I would be doing it for the rest of my life. Originally, I wanted to be a Paediatrician or OB/GYN, but during my second year at Monroe College, I was exposed to the world of dentistry and I became hooked.

4. What degrees do you hold and what would you say was your biggest challenge on the journey?
I have an Associate degree in Medical Assisting, a Bachelor’s degree in Biological Sciences and I’m pursuing a Doctor of Dental Surgery degree. The most challenging part of pursuing my career in dentistry is (1) lack of finances and (2) not giving in to the temptation of wanting to give up in spite of the challenges.

5. Can you tell us about some of your other activities while at college?
During my time at Baruch College, I was fortunate enough to be a member of the Women’s Varsity Volleyball team all while also working a part-time job and balancing life as a pre-dental/pre-med student.

6. Since leaving SXM, in what way would you say you have changed for the better?
Leaving the place I’ve known my entire life to live on my own in another country at a very young age forced me to grow in ways that I had not imagined. I’ve been exposed to different people, environments, and experiences that are still shaping my world view.

7. Would you say it’s important to balance academic study with other activities such as sports when at college? Yes—one thousand times yes! College in itself can be challenging as it is a new experience in many ways, so to add something as demanding as sports to that mix can and will be very challenging, but also a very enriching experience. I think everyone should take advantage of these opportunities while in college. Though may require self-discipline and time management.

8. What are your immediate and long term plans?
My immediate plan is to successfully complete my doctoral degree at Howard University and at the same time be a successful entrepreneur. My long-term plans would be to open my own practice, grow as an entrepreneur, and continue serving the people in my community in one way or another.

9. Coming from a small island, do you feel any added pressure having to excel at what you do?
Though the island is geographically small, I believe my education in St. Martin gave me a strong foundation that prepared me for what I was to encounter abroad. So with this confidence and my preparation, I didn’t really feel any pressure, I just set out the best that I could be, including being the best representation of St. Martin wherever I go.

10. What advice would you give to young people who want to follow the same field?
Do your research! Because the options for pursuing degrees in dentistry are competitive, make sure it’s something you’re passionate about, and it’s what YOU want to do.

11. What general advice would you give to the young people of St. Martin?
I know it’s cliché, but I believe in it one hundred percent: go after your dreams wholeheartedly, and unapologetically; recognizing that even this can change—and that’s okay. Oftentimes, we may not be confident in our ability to go ahead with the things we want in life, either based on our own insecurities or by expectations placed on us by others—and because of that, we end up staying stuck in the same place. So my advice to anyone wanting to pursue their dreams/goals—both big and small—is to go after them full-steam ahead!

Life is too short; make the best of it!
Christmas time on St. Maarten is one of the most anticipated seasons of the year; it is genuinely a special moment. On the island for starters, the holidays are not official without the legendary folk liquor, which is guavaberry rum. Guavaberry is still ever-present and though it is locally produced, it is still a cherished drink among many locals. It was first made centuries ago in the private homes of locals, who would produce what they needed for family and friends. This way, it became an integral part of local culture and tradition.

In the olden days of St. Maarten, guavaberry was known as the drink of Christmas. It was an essential part of the annual Christmas festivities as people went from door to door singing. Guavaberry rum is made from fine oak-aged rum and cane sugar and we cannot forget wild St. Maarten guavaberry – the fruit can be found high in the warm hills in the centre of the island.

There are many other Christmas drinks and local traditions: Sorrel, guava tarts, coconut tarts, steel pan music, persons thoroughly cleaning and freshly painting their house, among other things. There is consistently a joyous atmosphere around Christmastime as everyone truly looks forward to spending time with friends and family, just to be able to enjoy each other’s company.

Also, St. Maarten would begin celebrating the holiday season in October, making preparations to get new traditional clothing, among other things, so that everyone would look their best during the holiday season. While these traditions have stood the test of time over the years, we have noticed a decline in the joyous spirit. Now one would rarely encounter much of the Christmas spirit here on the island like they used to before.

Whatever happened to that once contagious holiday spirit we once loved and adored? Could it be that we have lost our way and no longer focus on the genuine meaning of the season? There have been many organizations trying to revive the spirit of the holiday season by hosting various activities like the Christmas Village. Also St. Maarten has adopted the Christmas tree lighting ceremony to encourage others to come and participate in the festivities. These things were rarely practiced, but they are now willingly embraced by locals and other cultures as well.

We have also witnessed various associations coming together to install Christmas lights in the heart of town to try and re-engage the population with the holiday spirit. There is one thing for sure; Christmas on St. Maarten is truly an experience! While a lot has changed from how preparations were done before, the meaning behind the holidays for St. Maarten still remains spending time with one another.
A student's Christmas abroad

By Cecily Nicholas

It’s almost that time of the year – Christmas! Christmas, a Christian holiday honouring the birth of Jesus, has evolved into a worldwide religious and secular celebration incorporating many pre-Christian and pagan traditions into the festivities. On this special day, many persons decorate their homes, make a variety of tasty foods, and exchange gifts. This day can be spent with close friends and family and it is usually filled with laughter, games and food. However, this Christmas will be a little different for our students abroad. Three students, all studying in the Netherlands, were interviewed on how they will be spending Christmas Day without their families.

Here are their responses:

Esther:
I am so used to spending Christmas with my family and friends. The week before Christmas, we usually create our Christmas menus and start planning everything so that we can ensure that Christmas comes out as planned. Christmas at home is bright and vivid. Every year, we try to use new colours that we did not use in the previous year. Two years ago, our themed colours were silver and royal blue. The colours before that were red and gold. Around Christmas break, I usually take the opportunity to go out with my friends to make the most of our Christmas break from school. On Christmas Day, our house is filled with our family and neighbours. We play music, we dance, and we make lots of jokes. The house is full of laughter and joy.

How do I feel?
Unfortunately, Christmas in the Netherlands is quiet and cold. I do not plan or decorate much, compared to back home as it’s just a few friends and me. During the Christmas break, I plan to mostly rest, but also to travel to other nearby cities and go shopping and do only one or two outdoor activities, due to the freezing weather and COVID-19. It’s going to be different for me, when it comes to a smaller Christmas dinner and interaction in the Netherlands. Luckily, due to smartphones and social media, I will be able to see, communicate and make jokes which will make me feel somewhat close to home by seeing their faces.

Byron Greene:
I am a graduate of the CAPE program at St. Maarten Academy and I’m currently studying mechatronics in Eindhoven. I have my upcoming Christmas break to look forward to. I wouldn’t say I am spending Christmas vacation by myself this year. However, this is my first time away from my mom and dad and my two sisters. I am fortunate to have quite some family living in the Netherlands and my plan for my Christmas break is to meet up with them. I haven’t met some of them, but at the same time, it has been so long that I feel I would be starting over in meeting them to some extent. So I’m looking forward to my Christmas break.

Anonymous:
My first Christmas in a whole different country without my family will be tough, as every Christmas was normally spent with my loved ones. Emotions hit from time to time, but I always keep in my head that I know what I came up here to accomplish. I try to video-call them as much as possible to keep me at ease and not miss them as much as I regularly do, since we can’t see one another in person. I plan to spend my Christmas with some close friends and people I hold closest to my heart. I might be going to some close friend’s house to eat, drink and enjoy myself as much as possible. This will distract me from dwelling on how much I miss my family.

Based on our students’ responses, it can be seen that their Christmas will be spent a little differently. Whether it’s traveling and shopping, or simply spending the holiday with a few close friends, they intend on being happy and spreading the Christmas spirit, even though they are without their families. After all, that is what Christmas is about.
Let’s Catch the Christmas Virus!

By Lavisha Dadlani

For many, the most awaited time of the year has finally arrived! As you see the lights going up on your neighbour’s porch, and the somewhat cool winter breeze blows in your hair, we can’t help but stop and think about how we are going to address this year’s elephant in the room. Covid-19 has done much damage to a lot of us, whether physically, mentally or emotionally, but this should not stop us from spreading our cheer!

Christmas can still be just as merry – and or perhaps even brighter – than all the other years. Nevertheless, some of us, especially the youth, might find it difficult to have an upbeat aura throughout this Christmas. Therefore, in hopes of uplifting their Christmas spirits, we sent out questionnaires to teenagers of various schools and grades, asking them what exactly they wanted to see their schools do to celebrate the season, amidst this pandemic holiday season.

The first question was about what the students’ pre-Covid celebrations looked like. The answers ranged from class parties, to movie- and game-nights, to performances. Those exciting moments were filled with laughter and glee, spreading the love with classmates and teachers. This year’s celebration will definitely be one that will stand out for the rest of our lives. Being present in a pandemic, with guidelines to follow and safety measures in place, we must still keep in mind our safety and the health of others. However, having these restrictions does not necessarily restrict our fun!

The second question posed to the students was: What do you hope to see in terms of Christmas festivities for your school celebrations this year? This question was asked with the intention of bringing creative ideas to the table, to encourage schools to incorporate the students’ ideas, which would then hopefully assist in enhancing everyone’s Christmas fever.

Each teen had a unique response about their anticipations concerning their school holiday celebrations. Some hoped that the same traditions would remain – of course, taking into account the necessary precautions to be applied. One answer of many that stood out to me was: “Smiles.” This student’s wish was that after all the hardships faced this year, smiling should one hundred percent be on the Christmas to-do list. Whether you will be spending quality time at school or in the comfort of your home, one thing we can all do this season is smile.

Having a lively and enjoyable virtual class party can still get everyone involved in sharing a new and unique Christmas experience. Watching movies together, dancing, singing and devouring delicious, home-cooked meals can all still take place – plus we will have the pleasure of being in our own homes. So don’t allow this pandemic to get you down; embrace these moments and indulge in what’s left of this Holiday Season, because 2020 will soon be gone.

On a final note, in order to keep this year’s spirit bright, remember to smile and spread the Christmas virus to everyone so that they too can have a Merry Christmas!
In 1974, the Foundation for Vocational and Pedagogic Training (F.V.P.T.) opened its door as the island’s first English-language secondary school. Some 46 years later, known as St. Maarten Academy, it has become recognized as one of the finest high schools on St. Maarten; producing some of the country’s most successful artists, educators, political leaders, entrepreneurs, and more.

St. Maarten Academy is proud once again to be the first high school to launch its own official Alumni Association. The mission of the St. Maarten Academy Alumni Association is to engage and enrich alumni as they support the advancement of their alma mater. The organization’s vision is to create a new culture of brotherhood, pride, leadership, and the continued pursuit of personal and professional excellence.

But how did the SMAAA come to be? In 2018, a number of different graduates were thinking of ways to reconnect to the school and to host reunions. With the encouragement and support of Principal Tallulah Baly; alumni Christopher Velasquez, Karen Cadogan and Ludmila Duncan met to begin developing what would be the alumni association. In 2019, SMAAA was officially incorporated and now in 2020, it has been launched. The inaugural board includes President Ludmila Duncan, Vice President Karen Cadogan, Secretary Luvanny Clark, Treasurer Yolanda Martina and Board Members Jonelle Richardson and Leonaris Rey.

St. Maarten Academy Alumni Association’s work revolves around three main components: mentoring, networking and financing. In development and professional development program for both students and alumni, monthly seminars and workshops, networking events and scholarship and award opportunities. Any student who attended the St. Maarten Academy Academic and PSVE campuses are eligible to become members and receive benefits. The SMAAA’s motto is “Stronger Together”.

For more information and to become a member, please contact the St. Maarten Academy Alumni Association via e-mail: academyalumnisxm@gmail.com. Follow
Simply Casual

‘Tis the season for comfortable and casual attire. We think so since we’re feeling like it too. This month our models had the opportunity to wear the latest clothing from Levi’s (the branch closed in the middle of the month).

May 2023

M. Johnson

Altitude
al at Levi’s

casual. At least
The Rona” have
ging free and fun.
ys and gals had
owcase some of
i’s on Fronstreet
to Old Street St.
en). You should go
k them out asap.
up for the models
one by the amazing
Pantophlet. Happy
Holidays!
CELEBRATING CHRISTMAS IN THE NEW NORMAL

By Juliana Guerría and Rohan Goswami

Christmas is an annual holiday many people look forward to. However, Christmas this year will definitely not be the same as last year’s. Currently, there are 69.3 million Covid cases worldwide, but many amidst this global pandemic are still trying to find a way to celebrate the holidays this year. As the saying goes, “There’s no place like home for the holidays.” This saying has become more meaningful during these times when parties and mass gatherings aren’t allowed. So what will Christmas 2020 look like amidst this pandemic?

We asked a few of our friends how they are planning to celebrate Christmas and how might the pandemic affect their celebration.

1. Do you have anything COVID-safe planned for this Christmas?

• Student #1: Not really, because the majority of my holidays will be spent outdoors; but due to circumstances, I can’t say for sure.
• Student #2: To be honest, not really. I haven’t even gone Christmas shopping, which is one of my favourite traditions that I never miss.
• Student #3: Not really; just decorating my house.

2. Not taking the pandemic into account, what are your usual holiday traditions?

• Student #1: My usual holiday traditions are going Christmas shopping and going to dinner with the whole Filipino community.
• Student #2: I’d go Christmas shopping with friends. Also, my family and I would go out either in the night or day, and just walk around; or we’d go to dinner or lunch. We’d also go visit other extended family or they’d come by us.
• Student #3: I usually have dinner and a gift exchange with friends.

3. Did you have any special plans that were ruined due to COVID?

• Student #1: That same dinner may or may not happen, depending on the location and the personal feelings of the members of the community.
• Student #2: Well, I don’t know if this is special exactly, but I was supposed to go to New York for Christmas. My favourite aunt and my other family live there and it was supposed to be more of an escape from this crappy year for me, but Covid got only worse, so I couldn’t go. I also had to go look at colleges and universities, but that got ruined too.
• Student #3: Yeah, I usually go out with friends; but I am refraining from doing so due to COVID.

4. Are you as excited for Christmas as you would usually be?

• Student #1: No, not really, because I would’ve loved to have had a Christmas party with friends from school as well.
• Student #2: I was excited when December started; but honestly, it just does not feel like Christmas. Christmas is my favourite holiday and I’m usually in the most festive spirit, but this year is so blue and my excitement isn’t there as much as it usually is.
• Student #3: Yes, I am still very much excited for this year. As you can see, the excitement for Christmas this year is not what it would have been under regular circumstances, which is expected. Furthermore, the majority of holiday traditions will be affected due to the social distancing orders that are in place.

Nevertheless, people are trying to do what they can to celebrate these festive holidays to the best of their ability. Despite our current circumstances, the holidays can still be a blast this year. With that being said, we encourage everyone to stay indoors and continue practicing social distancing as the pandemic is yet to be over, and if we are successful in observing all necessary safety protocols, we can celebrate Christmas like normal next year.

Stay inside, make yourself some hot chocolate, eat some rum cake, put on some Christmas music, and engage in family time via teleconferencing. On behalf of the Teen Times family, we wish you a Very Safe and Merry Christmas, as well as a Happy and Prosperous New Year!
Shepherd’s pie & more at Christmas

By Chantalia van Heynegen

MAIN COURSE
Shepherd’s Pie
Serving: 6

Ingredients
Meat:
2 tablespoons oil
1 cup chopped onion
1 lb. ground beef
2 teaspoons dried parsley
1 teaspoon dried thyme
½ teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon ground black pepper
1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
2 garlic cloves – minced

Potato:
1½-2 lbs potatoes – about 2 large potatoes peeled and cut into 1 inch cubes
8 tablespoons unsalted butter – 1 stick
1/3 cup milk or heavy cream
½ teaspoon garlic powder
½ teaspoon salt
¼ cup parmesan cheese

Instructions
Make the meat filling:
• Add the oil to a large skillet and place it over medium-high heat for 2 minutes.

Shepherd’s pie:
• Add the onions. Cook 5 minutes, stirring occasionally.
• Add the ground beef to the skillet and break it apart with a spoon. Add the parsley, thyme, salt, and black pepper. Stir well. Cook for 6-8 minutes, until the meat is browned, stirring occasionally.
• Add the Worcestershire sauce and garlic. Cook for 1 minute.
• Add the Prego Sauce or tomato paste. Stir well.
• Add the broth, frozen mix vegetable. Bring the liquid to a boil then reduce to simmer. Simmer for 5 minutes, stirring occasionally.
• Set the meat mixture aside.

Make the potato topping:
• Place the potatoes in a large pot with water. Bring the water to a boil, cook until potatoes are fork tender, 10-15 minutes.
• Drain the potatoes in a strainer. Return the potatoes to the pot.
• Add butter, milk or heavy cream, garlic powder and salt. Mash the potatoes and stir until all the ingredients are mixed together.
• Add the parmesan cheese to the potatoes. Stir until well combined.

Assemble the pie:
• Pour the meat mixture into an even layer.
• Spoon the mashed potatoes on top of the meat. Carefully spread into an even layer.
• Bake uncovered for 25-30 minutes until the top is starting to colour and the beef is bubbling through at the edges.

Cool for 15 minutes before serving.
Serve topped with chopped fresh or dried parsley (optional)

DESSERT
Banana Chocolate-Chip Muffin
Servings: 6

Ingredients
1 ½ cups all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon baking soda
1 teaspoon baking powder
½ teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
3 large ripe bananas, mashed
½ cup light brown sugar
1 large egg, room temperature
1/3 cup butter, or coconut oil, melted
1 tablespoon milk
½ teaspoon vanilla extract
1 cup semi-sweet chocolate chips

Instructions
Assembling the muffin:
• Preheat oven to 425°F.
• Spray a 12-count muffin pan with non-stick spray or use cupcake liners.
• Whisk together the flour, baking soda, baking powder, salt and cinnamon in a medium size bowl.
• Set aside.
• In a large bowl mash the bananas.
• On medium speed, beat or whisk in the brown sugar, egg, melted butter or oil, milk and vanilla in a large bowl. Pour the dry ingredients into the wet ingredients, then beat or whisk until smooth. Add chocolate chips to batter, batter will be thick.

Spoon the batter into liners, filling them all the way to the top. Bake for 5 minutes, then lower the temperature to 350°F and continue to bake for 13 to 15 minutes or until a toothpick inserted in the centre comes out clean. Allow the muffins to cool for 5 minutes, then transfer to a wire rack. Keep covered at room temperature for three to four days or in the refrigerator for up to one week.

DRINK
Supilgen & Corn
Servings: 6

Utensils
Jug of your choice
Large spoon
Measuring cups

Ingredients
2 Boxes of Supilgen (1 litre)
1 1/2 cups of can condensed milk
1 1/2 cups of can kernel corn
1 1/2 cups of water
1 tsp Vanilla extract
1/3 tsp Almond essence (optional)
Pitch of nutmeg

Assembling Supilgen & Corn:
• Pour Supilgen into a large jug.
• Add the condensed milk and water, stir until condensed milk is smooth.
• After combining the liquid, add the vanilla extract or almond essence, Viola! Carasup is ready to serve.

Banana Chocolate-Chip Muffin
By Chantalia van Heynegen
2020 Best Christmas Gifts for Teenagers

It doesn’t matter how well you know them, finding the perfect Christmas gift for your teenager is easier said than done.

Getting the right Christmas gift for your teenager is no easy feat. There’s always something new around the corner, and they’re bound to have different likes and interests as frequently as they update their Instagram.

Despite this, there are trendy and cool presents that will catch the eye of any teenager, from puffer jackets and Nike Air Force 1s to faux Game of Thrones Boys and street art tours.

While nobody knows your teen like you do, we think we’ve got Gen-Z down, so here are the best Christmas gifts for the teenagers of 2020.

1. Urban Outfitters Shearling Boo Pillow
Teenage bedrooms can often become, well, how shall we put this? Like they’ve been sucked into a vortex from hell and thrown back out again? At least this cushion will mean they’re nice and cosy among their mess.

2. Belkin BOOSTCHARGE™ Power Bank 10K (Multi-port)
If their phone is always out of battery, we have an easy solution. With an easy-to-use portable power bank, they can text, chat and watch videos without having to worry about losing charge. Complete with two USB ports, this bank keeps Whatsapps and Facetime at their fingertips, which is sure to impress.

3. Take Better Selfies Lens Kit
While you may not want them to spend their time taking selfies, they’re sure to love this handy kit. After all, with Tik Tok, Snapchat, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram (to name a few), it’s time to give up on the idea that their mobile will never not be an extension of their hand.

4. App Store and iTunes Gift Card
Don’t even try to buy them music, apps or games. They know what they like best, so let them choose what to download with the help of an Apple gift card. Happy streaming!

5. Anything from SHEIN Website
Trust us, Google it.

6. Eko Home MiMira
If you spend a lot of time wondering why your teen is hogging the bathroom mirror when they’ve got one in their bedroom, we can let you in on a secret. It’s bad lighting. This advanced, ultra-clear sensor mirror has three tone settings and touch control to create the perfect balance.

7. Pioneer DDJ-400 2-Channel DJ controller
If they’re obsessed with music, then a controller will be just what they need to take their skills to the next level. This easy-to-use one by Pioneer comes with a tutorial feature.

8. Cloud Nine The Alchemy Collection Original Iron Gift Set
Teens love to experiment with their look, so give them a helping hand with the Cloud Nine Original Iron. With its Kinder Heat Technology and Signature Mineral Infused Ceramic plates, they’ll be able to style their hair every day without causing too much damage. This limited edition set comes with a style case and texture comb too.

9. Total Upper Body Workout Bar
If he’s living at home with the ‘rents, he may not have space for a whole workout bench in his bedroom, but he can hang one of these pull-up bars in his door frame and still get a good workout in.

10. ‘Essential’ Shoe Cleaning Kit
Speaking of keeping your shoes clean, here’s a conditioning kit to keep his new kicks in tip top shape. The duo here comes with a gentle but effective cleansing foam and scrubbing brush to remove all kinds of stains.

11. Switch Lite Turquoise
Similar to the Nintendo Switch but smaller and newer, this Lite version is the perfect gift for any gamer to take on the go.
HAVING GIVEN SO MUCH OF HIMSELF, DR. VAN OSCH MARCHES INTO RETIREMENT

By Kandice Chambers

As Dr. Gerard van Osch, affectionately known as Jerry, marches off into retirement, we thought this would be a great time to feature not just Doc in an article, but also to talk about HIV/AIDS in general, and how so many, especially young people, have stopped talking about HIV/AIDS.

Speaking to Doc is also special to us because he has been a contributor to Teen Times in the early days of the St. Maarten AIDS Committee and when the Junior AIDS Committee was created. During this period, high risk sexual activity was a part of our 25-year history and we wish him nothing but the best in his well-deserved retirement.

Here’s “Part 1” of our two-part interview with Dr. Gerard van Osch.

1. What inspired you to launch the AIDS Foundation on St. Maarten?

The St. Maarten AIDS Foundation was formed in 2002 and is a continuation of the AIDS Committee, which was formed in 1990. So we’ve been in existence for 30 years. During my medical studies (70s and early 80s), I hadn’t heard much about HIV or AIDs, because it was not much of an issue at that time in Holland.

Before I came to St. Maarten, I worked a few contracts in Africa (Kenya, Egypt and Sudan). In Kenya and Sudan, I saw my first AIDS patients. I should say, I assumed they had AIDS – because we didn’t have tests available to confirm that at the time and no treatment was available – definitely not in the civil war zone that I worked in Sudan where I saw most of these patients.

When I did my specialization as Family Physician in Holland, I hadn’t seen any AIDS patients, but coming to St. Maarten in 1989, I noticed in the clinic where I worked that there were at the time already seven patients with HIV/AIDS. I thought that was a lot for such a small island and since that time there were tests available but no treatment, it was in any case possible to give patients a diagnosis and provide them with a treatment for opportunistic infections they had, due to their weakened immune systems and start prevention to reduce the transmission of HIV. That’s when I started the AIDS Committee.

In 1992, Elton (the first patient who was open about his HIV infection on St. Maarten) started working with the AIDS Committee going to schools to educate students. He had been diagnosed in Holland where he studied and had come back to St. Maarten to receive support from his family. Elton was already using AZT – at the time, the only medication available for AIDs – and I quickly sourced this medication with Simpson Bay Pharmacy to continue his treatment. Right away, I put all my other patients who were interested for treatment on AZT and started educating myself on prevention as well as care and treatment for persons living with HIV/AIDS.

In those early 90’s, there were only three of us physicians in the Caribbean giving treatment for HIV/AIDS: one in Trinidad, one in Haiti and myself. So patients from the entire region up until Grenada started calling and coming to St. Maarten for advice. Between 2000 and 2015, other countries in the Caribbean started offering treatment for HIV and, gradually, mostly all persons began receiving treatment at their countries of residence.

2. What are the symptoms of HIV in women and men, and are they different?

There are no specific symptoms of HIV/AIDS. Within the first few weeks after infection, one may have some mild cold symptoms or a mild rash, but they are easily missed and disappear quickly. Then over the course of many years, on average eight to 10 years, the immune system gradually weakens more and more to such a low level that your own immune system can’t keep under control bacteria, viruses and parasites that we are daily in contact with and that live in your body and on your skin.

These microorganisms then take the opportunity to make you sick, hence the name opportunistic infections (OIs). The weakened immune system also makes you more prone to certain types of cancer, so it depends on which infection or cancer you develop once you have a weakened immune system. On St. Maarten, the most frequent OIs are a certain type of pneumonia (lung infection), toxoplasmosis, brain infections, skin infections, thrush, intestinal infections and cancers such as Kaposi sarcoma of the skin and cervical cancer in women. Men and women can get the same OIs, so there is no difference there.

Stay tuned for “Part 2” of our very informative interview with Dr. Gerard van Osch in our next issue.
Name: Yuleissy Sanchez  
Age: 17  
School: Charlotte Brookson Academy  
Class: Form 4  
What is your art work about?  
The artwork is about Dexter’s Laboratory.  
What inspired you to create this artwork?  
I got inspired by watching the show on many occasions.

Name: Joline Rismay  
Age: 15  
School: Charlotte Brookson Academy  
Class: Form 4  
What is your art work about?  
This artwork is about a boy sitting on the edge of a hill, thinking about life.  
What inspired you to create this artwork?  
I was inspired by my school life and what I’m going through.

Name: María-Gea Acevedo  
Age: 16  
School: Charlotte Brookson Academy  
Class: Form 4  
What is your art work about?  
This artwork is about Santa Clause and his reinders flying through the sky heading to the town.  
What inspired you to create this artwork?  
I came across some artworks on Pinterest and decided to create one; also due to the season, I thought it would be nice to create one as well.

Name: Malakhi Carty  
Age: 16  
School: Sint Maarten Academy  
What is your art work about?  
I came up with many ideas of what the youth of St. Maarten can do to help the coral reefs and then decided to add them in my drawing. I used a TV because most of the time these types of activities are advertised on television. I placed it in polluted water while I added some details of my ideas on the outside of it. It was a lot of fun doing this piece and I made one in black and white and one in colour.  
What inspired you to create this artwork?  
I just started off figuring out basic things that the youth of St. Maarten can do to help the coral reefs.
Facebook launches its Collab music app to the public

Facebook has publicly launched Collab – an experimental music-making app that first launched as an invite-only beta back in May, TechCrunch reports.

The app allows users to create short-form music videos by combining up to three independent videos. For example, three musicians could each play a different part of a song and combine them into one video. But each video that’s created is also posted to a public “Collab” feed, where people can view and play along with it if they choose.

So you could also record one part then mix it with two other parts you find on the Collab feed that other people have recorded. Or you can just mix other people’s videos together – you don’t need to be a musician yourself. (Every user is properly credited for their contributions, according to Facebook.)

You won’t have to worry about lining up all the videos – Collab includes in-app tools to sync the parts together. Per its App Store page, “We make sure that as you swipe, the videos play at exactly the right moment to be in sync.” The app isn’t directly integrated with Facebook (yet, at least) but you can export the finished products to your Instagram story (as well as other platforms, including TikTok) via iOS share sheet.

Collab is free on the App Store, and you can download it today.

Fortnite gets a performance mode so it runs better on older PCs

Now everything runs Fortnite. It’s no mean feat that Fortnite manages to run as well as it does on just about any conceivable platform – from mobile to Switch to high-end gaming PC. In a recent post on its blog, Epic Games announced a feature called performance mode, which allows older PCs to run the game better. It became available on December 15.

The new mode “offers significant performance gains by trading out visual quality to lower memory usage and lighten the load on CPU and GPU,” the company writes, meaning the game will look less good so it doesn’t torch your hardware. (Users running Fortnite on older hardware will see a prompt about the mode when they boot up the game.) Epic also bundled in a feature that allows players to remove high-resolution textures from the game’s install, which should save a significant amount of hard drive space.

Epics claims users running the new mode will see a huge boost in frame rates on older machines, as compared to the previous low-performance settings. You’ll be able to use performance mode in both Battle Royale and Creative.

Amazon adds Live Translation to Alexa’s toolbox of skills

Alexa is gaining the ability to do live translations between English and Spanish, German, French, Hindi, Italian, and Brazilian Portuguese with a new update Amazon announced today. The update joins Alexa’s expanded multilingual skills that were added in November to make the assistant a more capable non-English speaker and translator on devices in the US.

Live Translation can be initiated with a voice command like “Alexa, translate Spanish.” Alexa will play a beep to signal that you can start speaking with your partner and then translate your conversations live, even displaying a live transcript on the screen of Echo Show devices.

Amazon sees this as being useful for talking with visiting friends and family from abroad or in a hotel setting through the Alexa for Hospitality platform. In support of the new skill, Amazon also says it modified Alexa to better handle natural pauses in conversations, thanks to changes to Alexa’s tolerance for end-of-sentence breaks.
How is Christmas celebrated all over the world?

Christmas is a warm and special time of the year that is well-known globally. It is simply a celebration that brings families, friends, and individuals together. From China to Russia, from Brazil to France, this occasion is celebrated all over the world. How is Christmas celebrated from Brazil to France, From China to Russia, and individuals together.

MEXICO

Christmas celebration in this country commences on December 16 with what is known as Las Posadas. During this season, families go out to shop for presents and ornaments. Additionally, their homes are beautifully decorated with evergreens and lilies. Individuals make lanterns, also known as farolitos, by creating unique designs in brown paper bags. After creating the design of their choice, candles are placed inside these paper bags. These lanterns are then placed to illuminate the community in the spirit of Christmas.

On Buena Noche, the children lead the procession to the church. Everyone attends the midnight mass. Once the mass has ended, church bells ring, fireworks light up the sky and the children receive presents from Santa Claus. Some individuals fast during Christmas Eve in hopes of seeing a vision of the golden pig on the wall. This vision is a sign of good luck. Moreover, a traditional dinner comprising fish soup and fried carp with potato salad is also eaten on Christmas Eve. Once dinner is over, presents are opened by the children right away. During this season, there are quite a few superstitions, too. If a shoe is thrown over your shoulder on Christmas Day, and the shoe points to the door, it indicates you will be married soon!

JAPAN

Unlike other countries, this country focuses on spreading happiness during Christmas instead of focusing on the religious aspect. It resembles Valentine’s Day in the sense that lovers spend time with each other on Christmas Eve and exchange gifts between themselves. Furthermore, they go on romantic walks to watch the Christmas lights and share meals together. In this country, fried chicken is often eaten on Christmas Day, and Christmas cake is traditionally eaten too. The Christmas cake is a sponge cake decorated with strawberries and whipped cream. It is a delicious sweet that is enjoyed among lovers, friends and family. During Christmastime, Beethoven’s Ninth symphony is also really special to the Japanese. Choirs all over the country sing it in German. Although Christmas is a special celebration, it is not a national holiday in Japan. However, individuals do receive a holiday on December 23, due to it being the Emperor’s birthday.

CZECH REPUBLIC

Children become very excited as they wait for St. Nicholas to arrive on December 5. When St. Nicholas arrives, he is often accompanied by a few angels and a few devils. Additionally, when he comes, he asks the children whether or not they’ve been good all year. He also requests that they sing a song or recite a poem. If the child has behaved well for the entire year, he or she receives a basket filled with presents, often consisting of chocolate and fruit. However, children who have behaved naughty may receive a lump of coal from the devil.

During this time, famous Canadian artists perform while fireworks ignite the sky. Also, individuals skate around under the glow of these colourful lights. The Toronto Christmas market celebrates the spirit of Christmas for five weeks long. Through food, art, and beautiful lights, the Christmas celebrations are kept alive.

GREECE

Carols are often sung by children, using instruments, such as drums and triangles, during Christmas Eve. As it is an old custom among the Greeks, golden boats are carried around by these children while they carol. If the children sing well, money, nuts and sweets are given to them. Furthermore, an enormous Christmas tree and three-masted sailing ship are put up in the second biggest city in Greece. Traditionally, roasted lamb or pork, spinach, cheese pie and salad are all eaten during Christmas as well.

Although Christmas is celebrated across the globe, each culture and country celebrates quite differently from the other. Some countries celebrate it with feasts and presents, while other countries celebrate it quite well. Regardless of how it is spent, Christmas brings individuals close together as they spend time with each other through these celebrations.