



PRESS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Alex Panton Foundation (APF) is pleased to announce the launch of the next cycle (2020-2021) of the evidenced-based Emotional Literacy Programme (ELP): “Zippy’s Friends” (for ages ranging 5-7) and “Apple’s Friends” (for age 7+). This is done in collaboration with the UK Partnership for Children. The APF originally launched the ELP in October 2019, and since then the ELP has been incorporated into 8 participating schools and organizations across the Cayman Islands, reaching 472 children - including children aged from 5-9 years, as well as older children with special / additional needs. The Emotional Literacy Programme is one of the first promotional Mental Health programmes in the Cayman Islands aimed at children and embedded in their school curriculum.

The 2020-2021 cycle includes a national roll-out and collaboration with the Department of Education, in support of the School Recovery Project. The School Recovery project is aimed at addressing the gap created during the COVID-19 pandemic, where students have been away from school for a prolonged period. The School Recovery project aims to provide extra support for students to transition back to school. The ELP has been selected as part of the School Recovery project to address social and emotional issues related to transition, change, and emotional difficulties.

On 20 August 2020, the APF ran virtual teacher training sessions for the following public primary schools across the Cayman Islands: Beacon Learning Centre (Cayman Brac), Creek and Spot Bay (Cayman Brac), East End Primary, Edna M Moyle Primary School, George Town Primary School, Lighthouse School, Little Cayman Education Service, Little Stars and Stepping Stones, Prospect Primary School, Red Bay Primary School, Savannah Primary School, Sir John A Cumber Primary School, Theoline McCoy Primary School (formerly Bodden Town Primary School), and West End Primary School (Cayman Brac). The following private schools also participated in the 20 August teacher training sessions: Montessori by the Sea, and First Baptist Christian School. During September 2020, teacher training will be run for the following private schools / NGO partners: Footsteps, Starfish Village Montessori, and YMCA. Island Montessori has also signed up for the programme in 2020, which will be run by one of the 2019 participating teachers.

The ELP teaches children skills for life, including how to cope with everyday difficulties; and how to communicate with and get along with other people while teaching self-awareness and building emotional resilience. The idea is to teach emotional literacy in our children's schools to enhance mental health, just like we teach P.E. in school to enhance physical health.

This ELP is widely used in the UK and over 30 other countries around the world and is recognised by the World Health Organization (WHO), European Portal for Investing in Children (EPIC), Canadian Best Practices Portal, National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices (NREPP), Early Intervention Foundation, and the European Commission of Good Practices in Mental Health and Wellbeing.

Out of 32 countries who have implemented the ELP worldwide, The Cayman Islands was the first to secure the license for both the mainstream and Special Educational Needs & Disability (SEND) pathway from the beginning of implementation. This ensures equal access and opportunity for all children, regardless of ability or need. The Cayman Islands is one of only 5 countries in the world to implement the SEND programme, in line with the Cayman Islands Disability policy, which aims to improve inclusion and equal access to health care, including mental health care.

The 2020-2021 ELP is offered free of charge thanks to a CI\$25,000 grant from R3 Cayman Foundation, a local non-profit organisation established this year to help our three islands proactively prepare for, resiliently cope with and sustainably recover from manmade or natural emergencies and disasters. The 2019-2020 ELP was supported by a CI\$25,000 Dart Grant, and Cayman Billfish Rundown tournament winners who voluntarily donated a portion of their winnings to assist the APF in furthering its mission. The APF will continue to fundraise to offer this programme well into the future.

To learn more about the Zippy's and Apple's Friends Programme or the SEND Programme, or for more information on upcoming events, please visit our website at www.alexpantonfoundation.ky or contact info@alexpantonfoundation.ky / zippy@alexpantonfoundation.ky

About the Alex Panton Foundation

The Alex Panton Foundation is a non-profit organization, founded by Wayne and Jane Panton in memory of their son Alex who succumbed to the effects of severe depression at aged 16. The APF's mission is to improve the mental health of children and young adults in the Cayman Islands through advocacy, awareness, and support. One of the aims of the APF is to provide hope and educational resources to those suffering from anxiety, depression, and other mental illnesses. APF also provides information and support to friends, family, teachers, students, carers, and the wider population through various forums and seeks to address discrimination and the stigma of mental illness.