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CARIBBEAN AIRLINES SET FOR GRAND CAYMAN SERVICE

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KIMPTON ADDS ROATAN TO CARIBBEAN PROPERTIES

TODAY'S WEATHER



High of 88
Low of 78

SEAS: Slight with wave heights of 1 to 3 feet.

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Stay-Focused divers get a briefing before a dive at Sunset House.

SHARMA NAMED CAYMAN'S NEW SOLICITOR GENERAL

The government has announced that Reshma Sharma is Cayman's new solicitor general.

She was appointed earlier this month following a rigorous open recruitment process, according to a government statement. Sharma, who was previously the acting solicitor general from 1 June 2017 to 31 July 2019, also has experience as the deputy solicitor general from June 2016 to August 2019.

Sharma, a native of Trinidad and Tobago, previously served as a Crown counsel and a senior Crown counsel in Cayman.

She has been involved in human rights litigation that has raised novel points of law in the Cayman Islands, including the first same-sex marriage challenge, the first challenge involving age/nationality discrimination under the Bill of Rights and the compatibility of statutory immunity provisions excluding claims in medical negligence with the Bill of Rights.

Sharma was a key part of the government's legal team in the same-sex marriage challenge by Vicki Bodden Bush and Chantelle Day, and successfully brought the application for a stay pending an appeal of Chief Justice Anthony Smellie's ruling to legalise gay marriage. That appeal is scheduled to be heard next week.

Before moving to Cayman, she served as a state counsel in her homeland.

She has provided legal guidance to government in a number of areas including immigration, civil aviation, employment, procurement, intellectual property and human rights.

"I am deeply honoured by this appointment and grateful to both the Honourable Deputy Governor and Honourable Attorney General for their confidence in my ability to lead this

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Youth with diverse abilities discover diving

Charity programme introduces young people to underwater world

KAYLA YOUNG

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For Clint Mooney, diving in Grand Cayman is a reminder of his independence. The ability to freely explore a new, underwater world grounds him and brings a sense of calm.

"I often think back on this one image of diving ... floating maybe two feet above the ocean floor and just looking around at all the fish and all the colourful coral. You find peace," he said.

After losing his mobility from the chest down in a car accident, that freedom was powerful.

The buoyancy and mobility that diving offered him was a stark contrast to how he first felt trying to operate his wheelchair.

"I was in the hospital in recovery for so long that my muscles got real weak. I remember the first time being in a wheelchair and pushing it myself. I couldn't even push across the carpet hallway. It was really tough. It took a lot out of me," he said.

"Then to come here and dive ..."

Mooney, who is from Virginia, first came to Cayman in 2011 with the Stay-Focused programme, a charity organisation based in

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Carnival signs on for Bahamas cruise port project

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Carnival Cruise Lines has agreed a deal to build a \$100 million cruise port in Grand Bahama, according to Bahamas Prime Minister Hubert Minnis.

Minnis made the announcement on Friday at a youth convention, saying, "I am pleased

to announce that after many months of negotiations, we have delivered ... a massive project for the people of Grand Bahama ... the Carnival port development is going full steam ahead."

He said the government would provide more details of the deal in upcoming days.

Earlier news reports indicated the project is expected to cost around US\$100 million. The

Bahamas government had announced in February that it was in negotiations with Carnival over the project, which it claims will create 1,000 jobs.

Carnival is also one of the key partners in the Verdant Isle Port Partners consortium that was recently announced as the 'preferred bidder' for the expanded cruise and cargo port project in

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Carnival Cruise Lines has reached an agreement with the Bahamas government to build a cruise ship port in Grand Bahama. - PHOTO: TANEOS RAMSAY

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A dive instructor keeps an eye on Stay-Focused participants as they dive the Kittiwake wreck. - PHOTO: TONY LAND



Ready to get in the water: A group of Stay-Focused divers, with instructors and volunteers, on one of Red Sail Sports' boats. - PHOTO: SUPPLIED

Charity programme introduces young people to underwater world

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New York that has certified 133 divers with disabilities over the past 16 years.

The 28-year-old initially came as a student and has since returned as a mentor.

This summer he joined three Caymanian interns in guiding the novice divers. For local students, the programme often provides their first chance to learn diving.

Valentina Bustos, 16, was one of the local interns who dived for the first time this summer. Being able to share that experience with other young people of diverse abilities was enriching for her.

"I got an opportunity to show them around the island and basically be a leader and mentor for them in a way, so it was very special," she said.

The week-long programme taught her to try new experiences and to not fear meeting different types of people.

Fellow intern Martina



Clint Mooney first came to Cayman to dive with Stay-Focused in 2011. This year he returned as a mentor.

Burton, 17, returned to the programme for the second time this summer. She developed a deep sense of camaraderie with the other participants and it pained her for the programme to come to an end.

Overall, however, she said the experience brought her joy.

"[It taught me] not to underestimate anyone, because

anyone can do anything once they put their mind to it. In my past experiences with first-time divers who have no [physical] difficulties whatsoever, they still had a little bit of struggle. But for these guys, it went so smooth," she said.

Intern Ashley Ebanks, 17, also returned for the second time this year. Coming back was like a reunion with



The Caymanian interns Martina Burton, Valentina Bustos and Ashley Ebanks helped Stay-Focused divers during their trip to Cayman this year.

friends. And to share the underwater world with those friends was something special.

"We always look at [disability] as the worst thing that could happen to you. But then getting to know these people and be a part of their lives, it shows you that despite what they were born with ... they can still do anything they can put their minds to," she said.

"It has been such a motivation for me. I can literally go out there and do whatever I put my mind to."

Stay-Focused held four one-week-long sessions this year at the Marriott and The Ritz-Carlton in partnership with Red Sail Sports. Two programmes were for new divers and the other two were for returning divers.

The sense of friendship

and independence fostered by the programme is exactly what founder Roger Muller had in mind when he started the charity. Based on programme surveys, he said the new divers report feelings of empowerment.

"The participants typically say that they feel more confident as a result of doing the programme. They are motivated to try new things," Muller said.

"Scuba diving is something that most of them never thought they would do. And they are also very much motivated to set higher goals."

That is exactly what Mooney has described from his time diving. The experience has taught him to look beyond disability.

"When you get out of the water, you're still independent. You don't have to worry about anything. You just keep on rolling," he said.

"Disability, what disability?"

Carnival signs on for Bahamas cruise port project

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Grand Cayman.

Unlike the Cayman project, the Grand Bahama port appears to have broad support,

Kwasi Thompson, Minister of State for Grand Bahama, told the *Nassau Guardian* newspaper he was extremely pleased with the announcement, highlighting the benefit to restaurateurs and taxi operators.

"I think that it is going to have a tremendous impact on unemployment on the island," he said.

The project has drawn little opposition, with environmental groups indicating they are not opposed to it.

Members of the Save the Bays group, which opposed an earlier plan for a Carnival-backed port on

Carnival is also one of the key partners in the Verdant Isle Port Partners consortium that was recently announced as the 'preferred bidder' for the expanded cruise and cargo port project in Grand Cayman.

the pristine east end of Grand Bahama, told the *Nassau Guardian* earlier this year that they did not object to the new location, near Freeport.

A separate cruise pier project in the Bahamas is creating more controversy. Save the Bays is one of a number of groups opposing Disney's planned port development at scenic Lighthouse Point on Eleuthera.

Signatures are being collected for a petition to stop that project.

Carnival is not without its critics in the Bahamas, particularly since it was fined US\$20 million by a US court after admitting a string of environmental violations, including dumping plastic waste in Bahamian waters.

A column in Bahamas newspaper *The Tribune* this week labelled Carnival a "serial bad actor" and opined, "A thousand jobs will not pay the price for unquantifiable damage to the country's natural environment".

Sharma named Cayman's new solicitor general

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Portfolio and its talented and dedicated staff," said Sharma in the prepared statement.

"It has been an incredible privilege to serve the Government of the Cayman Islands over the past 14 years and I look forward to this new chapter and the experiences to come. There will be challenges ahead but with the collective best efforts of my staff, the Portfolio will continue to strive for excellence as part of the journey towards a world-class civil service."

Deputy Governor Franz Manderson praised Sharma, saying, "I am delighted that an attorney of the calibre of Ms. Sharma has been appointed to this position within the Cayman Islands Government. Ms. Sharma has served our Government admirably in all the years she has



Reshma Sharma

served in the public sector."

Sharma earned a masters of law degree from the University of Aberdeen in Scotland, and she has served as a member of the Cayman Islands Water Authority board for many years. She is also a member of the Anti-Money Laundering Steering Group, the Law Reform Commission and the Cayman Islands Child

Safeguarding Board.

As head of the Treaties and Conventions Unit in the Attorney General's Chambers, she worked on conventions such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the extension of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

"I hold Ms. Sharma in high esteem for the probity and intelligence she brings as a professional in the Portfolio of Legal Affairs," said Attorney General Samuel Bulgin in the press release. "Her attention to detail and subtle nuances when dealing with even complex matters has been an invaluable asset within these Chambers. I congratulate on her attaining this important position in government and welcome her expertise in the service of the people in the coming years."