

NEWS

Sando Mayor praises Fonclaire's community loyalty

NARISSA FRASER

SAN Fernando Mayor Junia Regrello has praised the Fonclaire Steel Orchestra for its consistency and loyalty to its community.

The 55-year-old steelband is sponsored by the National Lotteries and Commission Board (NLCB) and launched a lotto centre and gift shop at its Dottin Street headquarters on Mon-

day morning. Regrello said he believed every steelband in the country should have a lotto centre as it assists with self-sustenance. He recalled requesting one for his own band Skiffle Bunch in 2003 but being told it already had "too many outlets on Coffee Street."

He said he saw a post on social media asking people to name the "most successful steelband in South," and he

wondered, "Where are they going with this?"

"What constitutes success? Winning Panorama alone cannot be the benchmark for success. It has to deal with so many factors. Fonclaire is a successful pan side because you consist of all the elements."

He said it was one of the few steelbands in the country that was so community-based. The name combines two street names - Fonrose



From left: Ryaad Hosein, councillor for Les Efforts East/Cipero; Susan Worrel, events manager for NLCN; Kenneth Arthur, Fonclaire committee member; Junia Regrello, San Fernando Mayor; Darren Sheppard, arranger for Fonclaire Steel Orchestra; and Elisheva Phillips, unveil a Fonclaire banner at the opening of its lotto booth and gift shop on Monday. PHOTO BY MARVIN HAMILTON

Street and Claire Street. "I commend the community for the support you have given this band over the years because their loyalty is based on

your support." He said he considers Fonclaire to be the oldest steelband in San Fernando as it has had "55 years of unbroken service," while others paused and resumed many times.

"You are raising the benchmark for others to follow." The band's managing director Darren Sheppard said the location would always be his home and he will continue to ensure the community feels a sense of pride. "The name

represents our community. It is who we are, it is what we are and Fonclaire has always been the engine that drives this community and we want to make it the economic engine now.

But he added, "At the end of the day, it's all about music. It's about making an environment where we could make the best music we possibly could."

Although he was not present, Minister of Culture, Tourism and the

Arts Randall Mitchell sent his greetings. He sent a note to the organisers which was read aloud.

He said the steelband continued to evolve and serve its community.

"And as that evolving continues, all commendation goes to the leadership of the band for including a commercial venture."

The gift shop is filled with paraphernalia including T-shirts, mugs, among other things.

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