

Central Alabama Caribbean American Organization

General Membership Meeting

January 18, 2020

The meeting was called to order by Pauline Ford Caesar, President. The meeting kicked off with networking and introductions which allowed everyone to participate and learn about each other. Pauline started with an overview and history of the organization. CACAO started 10 years ago but has been an official, non-profit organization for 9. We started with a few likeminded individuals and each year our membership has grown. Our first Festival was downtown at Railroad Park, moved to Boutwell Auditorium the next year, then in Linn Park for several years and last year in Bessemer. Pauline went on to explain our new relationship with the City of Bessemer and how it promises to be mutually beneficial to CACAO and the City of Bessemer.

The mission of CACAO is to provide the local Caribbean community the opportunity to gather, to share the Caribbean culture with Central Alabama and to help those students of Caribbean descent with money and support. Pauline explained our scholarship efforts needed the memberships help in identifying those students from various colleges and urging them to apply. The group had several ideas to help raise money to fund our efforts. Pauline also asked for help – new blood and new ideas. CACAO now has three vacant positions on the Board: Treasurer, assistance Treasurer, and a general Board member and we are looking for names of people that want to serve. The meeting schedule was reviewed as well as CACAO's various committees.

Many of our networking events were discussed in detail:

- The Caribbean Festival including the parade
- Our Birthday Party
- The CACAO Picnic
- The Holiday Dinner Dance

In addition, the attendees had some great ideas to help the organization. Some of the ideas were: applying for grants to take our culture to the elementary schools and neighborhoods; holding a Taste of the World event since the Caribbean has so many cultures; having an informal Valentine's party to raise money; expanding the Parade to include floats for Sponsors; and many more ideas.

We had many people volunteering for various committees. The committees are as follows:

- Birthday Party Committee
- Scholarship Committee
- Festival Committee which includes the Vendor Task Force and Parade Task Force
- Vendor Committee:
- Picnic Committee
- Dinner / Dance Committee

We ended with a new focus on growing our organization and increasing membership