

Hospitality

Citizens of the Caribbean

**An Interview with Adam Stewart,
Chief Executive Officer, Sandals Resorts International**



Working with Great Shape! Inc's iCare Project, Sandals Foundation brings eye care professionals to Jamaica and provides free eye care to thousands in need (center); Children participate in the Sandals Foundation's "Climate Change" project, which teaches the importance of environmental responsibility (right)

EDITORS' NOTE Adam Stewart has held his current post since November 2006. Stewart oversees all areas of operations for the 30-year-old resort empire founded by his legendary father Gordon "Butch" Stewart. Prior to becoming CEO, he was Director of Resort Product, responsible for all on-property operations and revenues across the company's three major brands: Sandals Resorts, Beaches Resorts, and Grand Pineapple Beach Resorts. A member of the Sandals Resorts International Executive Committee, Stewart also served as Chairman of the Sandals' Youth Committee and is currently the President of the Board for the Sandals Foundation, Inc. He was raised in Jamaica and graduated from Florida International University's Hospitality Management Program before implementing his knowledge in various departments within Sandals Resorts International.



Adam Stewart

COMPANY BRIEF Founded in 1981, Sandals Resorts International (www.sandals.com) is based in Montego Bay, Jamaica and owns and operates 14 couples-only, Luxury Included® resort hotels in the Caribbean. The resorts are located in Jamaica, Antigua, Saint Lucia, The Bahamas, and soon in Grenada and offer upscale amenities such as gourmet à la carte dining and activities including scuba diving and golf. The company also owns three resorts under the Beaches brand name: one in Negril, Jamaica; one in Ocho Rios, Jamaica; and one in Providenciales, Turks & Caicos. Beaches Resorts caters to families with Kids Camp programs, Xbox® 360 Play Lounges, Pirates Island Water Parks, and certified nanny services. Beaches Resorts is also home to the Beaches Resorts' Caribbean Adventure with Sesame Street®, which brings kids' characters like Elmo and Big Bird to the resorts year-round for daily activities and special stage shows. Grand Pineapple Beach Resorts – located in Antigua and Negril, Jamaica – offer an authentic Caribbean experience at an affordable rate.

Would you provide an overview of The Sandals Foundation?

Launched in 2009 as the philanthropic arm of Sandals Resorts International, the foundation puts a formal framework to the incredible work my father began more than 30 years ago to benefit the people and places of the Caribbean. At its core, The Sandals Foundation represents the very best of our organization, harnessing our passion, energy,

skills, and brand power to tackle issues under three broad headings: community, education, and environment.

We are citizens of the Caribbean; it is our home and we are uniquely positioned to understand the challenges facing the communities where we operate and to deliver real resources in terms of long-term solutions to prepare the Caribbean people and these islands for a richer and more hopeful future.

How do you work within the community to address major challenges throughout the Caribbean?

With 10,000 team members across the region, we are part of the community where we operate in the Caribbean. Special Sandals Foundation teams made up of employees are established at all of our resorts in each of the five islands so they can help to deliver outreach projects that we have been operating for years, encourage colleagues to play a bigger role in everyday efforts to build and maintain relationships with our local communities across the Caribbean, and determine the greatest needs in the region.

Our leadership role is about sharing best practices and encouraging partnerships with other stakeholders so that these community organizations can become self-sustaining centers for meaningful, measurable community development and improvement.

Would you highlight some of your education-centered programs?

We work closely with the 26 schools in the region to upgrade their infrastructure and assist with supplies such as computers, books, and sports equipment to the extent that we have built schools from the ground up in areas of greatest need.

Teacher training and parental involvement are crucial investments in the successful development of the students we work with. As such, we have undertaken Math Teacher Training in the Bahamas, CPR Training for teachers in Turks & Caicos, and we have provided grants for teachers to pursue their bachelor's degrees. We have also launched a Parenting Partners Intervention Program to help parents get more involved in their children's lives, both at home and at school, through their own personal development.

The Sandals Foundation also grants scholarships for students for their five years in high school. This program not only funds students' tuition, yearly medicals, uniforms, and books, but provides a support network and mentorship.

In 2011, The Sandals Foundation launched the "Reading Road Trip," an initiative aimed at bringing together vacationing volunteers and beginning readers in our local schools for one-on-one lessons to improve literacy levels and comprehension. Our principals' reports have indicated that for the first time, there has been an overall increase in the number of students leaving basic school with the ability to read.

Where do you focus your support for the environment?

We have raised environmental awareness among primary school-age children that focuses on sustainability and their role in preserving the region's critical environmental assets. This is done through lessons in schools and local awareness campaigns, which we operate jointly with other partners.

We're also in the business of creating consciousness among the local community such as our outreach to local fishermen about the invasive lionfish species, which is disrupting the delicate marine ecosystem in The Bahamas and Jamaica. Our foundation also manages two marine sanctuaries to improve fish population, coral growth, and the protection of indigenous turtles.

Additionally, we have worked alongside the Environmental Division in Antigua to plant 3,800 wild Tamarind trees to create a buffer zone to protect the local forest in Body Pond.

How critical is it to build partnerships for your philanthropic work?

The Sandals Foundation is fortunate to have the support of some of the best partners in the industry. Travel companies such as Flight Centre, Air Canada Vacations, and airlines such as Air Canada and American Airlines have worked alongside us for disaster relief in Haiti, built much needed computer rooms at schools, and provided us with hundreds of volunteers. We have partnerships with specialists such as dentists, teachers, and opticians through Great Shape! Inc.; and we have relationships with global partners such as Sesame Workshop® and The Coca-Cola Company, who's educational and fitness programs we have implemented in the Caribbean.

We also have partnerships with other non-profit companies such as The Travel Foundation with which we are doing a glass jewelry program for inner city kids; Food For The Poor, which we have worked alongside to build one school and to help refurbish others; and Pack for A Purpose, which encourages travelers to the Caribbean and other countries to bring needed school supplies when they travel. ●