

EASTYARD

EAST YARD NEWSLETTER

APRIL 2026 ISSUE

SOCIAL GOOD SUPERSTAR
JILLEEN MATTHEWS DE
VERTEUIL

EAST YARD NEWS +
UPDATES

A portrait of Jilleen Matthews De Verteuil, a woman with dark hair, smiling and wearing a bright pink ruffled top. The text 'AMPLIFY Connect For Good' is overlaid on the bottom of the image.

AMPLIFY
Connect
For Good

April Publisher's Letter

"Small opportunities are often the beginning of great enterprises."
— Demosthenes

Demosthenes was absolutely right. From his utterance in 384 BC to present-day 2026, not much has changed. A foot in the door can still lead you down pathways to success.

Here at East Yard, we double down on connecting culture, commerce, community impact, and cultural exchange as **Arima's Creative and Cultural Campus** and our purpose remains clear: to support opportunities for creative practitioners, social entrepreneurs, and nonprofit partners to develop and launch impactful products, services, and ideas that position culture and creativity as drivers of social impact and economic empowerment.

One such opportunity is our upcoming **Tiny Theatre initiative**. We are seeking to partner with a company interested in creating experimental, avant-garde, and boundary-pushing work. Original productions, multidisciplinary approaches, unconventional staging. The kind of theatre that does not just entertain, but engages deeply with social issues and lived experience. We are not just offering AMPLIFY Studio Café as a venue; we want to give the selected company a home for development, collaboration, and consistent showcasing. A space where ideas can be tested, refined, and shared in an intimate and meaningful way.

We are also building on our momentum in Carnival. As we look ahead to Carnival 2027, **Joki One x East Yard** is expanding our circle and inviting individuals to come on board, not just to play mas, but to actively contribute to building something intentional. Whether it is inviting new masqueraders, supporting costume production, shaping our marketing, contributing to our evolving interpretation of Sailor Mas, learning the business of mas, or simply being part of something meaningful, there is space for you.

On our cover, you will meet **Jilleen Matthews De Verteuil**, who said yes to an opportunity almost ten years ago as part of East Yard's very first arts and social change programme. This year, she has written and illustrated her first publication, *Holidays in Trinidad and Tobago*, a culturally rich colouring and activity book for all ages, published by East Yard Enterprises. I applaud Jilleen for her continued willingness to grow through every opportunity presented.

East Yard does not only create opportunities for others. It continues to create them for me as well. From February to April, I have had the privilege of visiting nearly a dozen socially impactful and environmentally focused organisations across Trinidad and Tobago as part of a collaborative project with **Art By Creative Design**, **RJ LiveTT Productions**, and East Yard Enterprises, supported by the **UNDP GEF Small Grants Programme**. Follow our socials for highlights from each visit. So do not forget to seize the day and embrace the opportunities that excite your very soul.

Sit back and enjoy this month's newsletter.

Give thanks,
Kevon



Jilleen Matthews De Verteuil - Cover Story

Amplifying Culture Through Creativity: The Story of Jilleen Matthews De Verteuil

For Jilleen Matthews De Verteuil, creativity is not just a skill; it is a way of life. A multidisciplinary artist whose work spans sewing, drawing, painting, crafting, and graphic design, Jilleen has always found joy in bringing ideas to life with her hands. While she explores many creative forms, drawing remains her first love and the foundation of a journey that continues to evolve.

Her artistic path began in secondary school, where she formally studied art, and later expanded through screen printing at YTEPP. Like many creatives, Jilleen experienced a period of distance from her practice, channelling her talents mainly into school projects for her children and creative favours for friends. But in 2018, something shifted. Reconnecting with other artists reignited her passion, drawing her back into painting, murals, and even participating in exhibitions. It was also during this period that writing found its way into her life, beginning with journaling and eventually expanding into authorship.

This reconnection with creativity gave birth to her book, *Holidays in Trinidad and Tobago*. The idea was both simple and deeply meaningful. As her children grew older, Jilleen noticed they struggled to remember local holidays and their significance. She set out to create something interactive—something that would not only educate but also engage and stay with them. The result is a work that blends creativity with cultural preservation, designed to make learning about Trinidad and Tobago's traditions both fun and memorable.

At the heart of Jilleen's work is a deep belief in the importance of documenting and sharing local traditions, especially for younger generations. In a rapidly changing world, her work serves as a bridge—connecting children and families to their cultural identity while creating keepsakes that can be cherished for years to come.

For Jilleen, art is storytelling. Each piece she creates reflects the rhythms, traditions, and spirit of Trinidad and Tobago. Whether through illustration, craft, or design, her work captures moments of cultural significance, translating them into visual narratives that resonate across generations. She sees her role as an artist as both creative and cultural. Jilleen also believes that artists carry a responsibility to shape cultural narratives through meaningful, thoughtful work. For her, this means creating pieces that are not only visually compelling but also educational and rooted in purpose.

This philosophy aligns seamlessly with what it means to “Amplify for Good.” For Jilleen, it is about using creativity as a tool for positivity, connection, and cultural awareness. Her work invites people to learn, reflect, and celebrate who they are, while fostering a deeper appreciation for the traditions that define us.

Through her art, Jilleen hopes to leave audiences inspired. She wants people to feel a sense of pride in their culture, to reconnect with their roots, and to return to her work as a source of inspiration and remembrance.

Her journey as a creative has been shaped by years of exploration—starting from childhood passions, evolving through education, and strengthened by community and collaboration. Along the way, she has embraced new forms, pushed past self-doubt, and continued to grow.

One quote that continues to guide her journey is: “*There is no such thing as YOU CAN'T.*”

It is a mantra born from experience and a reminder that even in moments of uncertainty, persistence and small steps can lead to something meaningful.

In every stitch, stroke, and story, Jilleen Matthews De Verteuil is not just creating art; she is preserving culture, inspiring connection, and amplifying for good.



East Yard's News & Updates

Upcoming Events

Paint. Plant. Pour

A sip and paint you do not want to miss.

Come and customize your pot, plant your cactus and sip some wine!

- 📅 Saturday 2nd May
- 🕒 3:00 PM - 6:00 PM
- 📍 Amplify Studio Café, East Yard, 27 Prince Street, Arima
- 👉 \$250 (Materials included)

WhatsApp 1.868.477.5629 to register

PAINT. PLANT. POUR. \$250

• Makes for a great Mother's Day gift!

Spend a fun afternoon customising your pot, planting your cactus, and pouring out wine!

SAT 2 MAY, 3:00-6:00
EAST YARD, ARIMA

(Materials, plant, wine and refreshments inc.)

• WhatsApp 477-5629 to register
• Limited spaces available

Reset & Play

Studies show that play is not just for children; it is a vital, rejuvenating activity for adults that enhances overall well-being, mental health, and social connection.

"Reset & Play" is a simple, relaxed creative session where you can slow down, make something with your hands (nothing complicated), and take a little break from everything else. It's not a class, and you don't need to be "creative".

Let's hold space for adult play.

📅 Sunday 26th April
🕒 2:30 PM – 3:30 PM
📍 Bacano Bookshop at East Yard, 27 Prince Street, Arima
💰 \$80 per person

WhatsApp 279-0415 to reserve your spot.



Want to have your own showcase?

We're opening up a new opportunity at AMPLIFY Studio Café – this time for theatre.

East Yard is looking to partner with an up-and-coming theatre company, ideally based in East Trinidad, that is ready to grow its work within a supportive, creative environment. Through this collaboration, the selected company will be housed at East Yard and use our space as a base to develop and present a Tiny Theatre concept.

So what is Tiny Theatre?

At its core, Tiny Theatre is an intimate, small-scale performance format designed for close audience interaction, experimental storytelling, and flexible staging. It's theatre experienced up close, where the line between performer and audience softens and the work feels immediate and human.

"Tiny" doesn't mean small in impact. These productions are typically designed for audiences of around 10–40 people, using minimal space, simple sets, and compact production design. The scale allows for more creative freedom, lower production pressure, and deeper audience connection.

We're especially interested in work that is experimental, avant-garde, and boundary-pushing. This includes original pieces, devised work, solo performances, multidisciplinary approaches, and bold reinterpretations of existing material. While original work is encouraged, adaptations and reimagined classics are also welcome.

This opportunity is open to emerging and established theatre companies, directors, playwrights, and performers who are interested in pushing their practice and exploring new ways of making and presenting work. More than anything, we're looking for collaborators who see theatre as a tool not just to entertain, but to engage meaningfully with social issues and lived experience.

Tiny Theatre creates space for artists to test ideas, take risks, and build work in a way that feels intentional and supported. With lower production costs, greater flexibility, and a built-in opportunity for consistent showcasing, it offers a strong foundation for growth, both creatively and professionally.

We're not just offering a venue. We're offering a home for development, collaboration, and ongoing presentation, a space where work can be shaped over time and shared with an audience in a real, connected way.

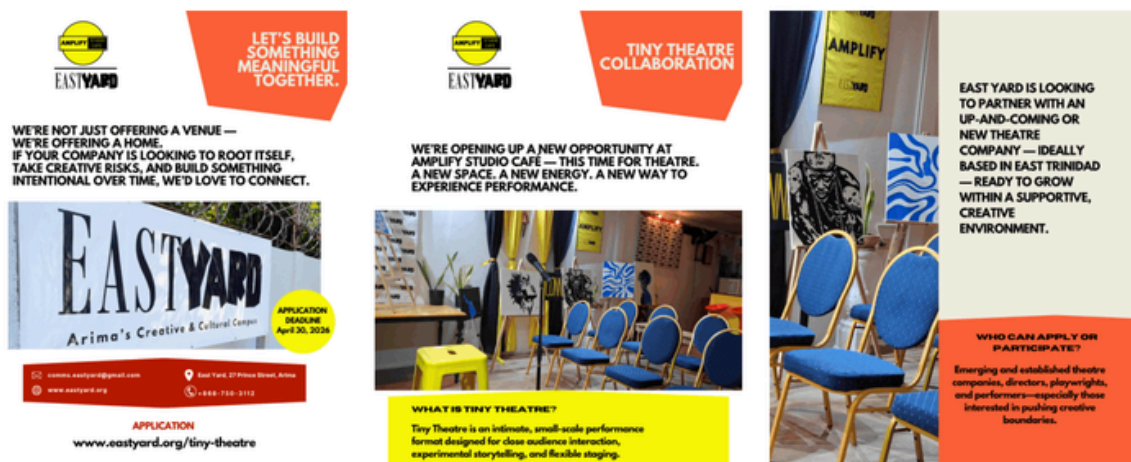
If your company is looking for somewhere to root itself, experiment, and build something meaningful, we'd love to connect.

Apply by April 30, 2026:

<https://www.eastyard.org/tiny-theatre>

Let's build something meaningful together. 🤝

[Apply Here](#)



Join our Community Committee

A reimagining of Sailor Mas and an open invitation to build with us

ARE YOU SOMEONE WHO:

- Moves people
- Builds networks
- Has ideas, energy, and initiative
- Loves Carnival and culture

Before anything else, this is a **development opportunity**.

For those interested in the business of Carnival, its preservation, and the intentional growth of community, joining us offers a chance to learn by doing. From concept to road, you'll gain insight into how mas is designed, produced, marketed, and sustained—while contributing to a model that treats culture as both heritage and enterprise.

We see **Joki One x East Yard** as more than a Carnival band. It's a growing platform for rethinking how Sailor Mas is created, experienced, and sustained.

As we prepare for **Carnival 2027**, we're expanding our circle and inviting individuals to join us—not just to play mas, but to actively contribute to building something intentional.

This is an opportunity for those who want to:

- Learn the business of mas from concept to execution
- Support costume production and bring design ideas to life
- Engage in marketing and promotion to shape how the band is seen and experienced
- Invite new masqueraders and grow the community
- Help shape the vision as we continue to evolve our interpretation of Sailor Mas
- Or simply choose to be part of something meaningful

Our work sits at the intersection of tradition and innovation. We honour Sailor Mas, while pushing it forward through contemporary design, wearable costumes, and a model that considers sustainability and long-term cultural value.

What we're building requires more than a team. It requires people who are curious, committed, and ready to contribute their energy, skills, and perspective.

If you've ever wanted to be part of mas beyond the road, this is your moment.

Join us as we shape what comes next.

Be part of Joki One x East Yard.

 **VISIT OUR WEBSITE FOR MORE info OR TO APPLY**

www.jokioneXeastyard.com/community-committee



JOKIONE x EAST YARD

ARE YOU SOMEONE WHO:

- MOVES PEOPLE
- BUILDS NETWORKS
- HAS IDEAS, ENERGY, AND INITIATIVE
- LOVES CARNIVAL AND CULTURE

WE'RE LOOKING FOR YOU.



www.jokioneXeastyard.com

JOKIONE x EAST YARD

WHETHER YOU:

- INVITE NEW MASQUERADERS
- SUPPORT COSTUME PRODUCTION
- ENGAGE IN MARKETING AND PROMOTION
- HELP SHAPE THE VISION
- WANT TO ACTIVELY LEARN ABOUT THE BUSINESS OF MAS
- OR JUST CHOOSE TO BE PART OF SOMETHING MEANINGFUL

THERE'S SPACE HERE FOR YOU.



www.jokioneXeastyard.com

Subscribe To Our Podcast

Welcome to AMPLIFY Connect: The Podcast, presented by East Yard Enterprises and production partner RJ Live TT Productions!

Join Kevon Gareth Foderingham and special guest hosts for dynamic conversations with changemakers and visionaries as we explore development work, art and social impact, and the transformational power of cultural diplomacy.

Subscribe now and be part of the conversation! Don't miss an episode—follow us on YouTube and Spotify and join us in amplifying voices that drive change.

Watch: https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLDcScBus_dRJ7Xr8qJk8zgQQGod1Di5Yp

Listen: <https://www.eastyard.org/amplify-connect-the-podcast>



“I’VE NOTICED THE PARTICIPATION OF YOUTH IN TRADITIONAL MAS HAS LESSENERD”.

WALDA GEORGE-WAITHÉ
ARTIST, DESIGNER
& MAS BAND LEADER

Kevon Gareth Foderingham - Editor-in-Chief

Deneka Thomas - Managing Editor

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