

*With Santa Kissoon photo*

## Kissoon gives the ho, ho, ho to community

**Santa, aka lawyer and community booster Dhaman Kissoon, is surrounded by attendees at his annual Children's Christmas Party. Gerald V. Paul photo.**

**By Gerald V. Paul**



“The fact that I have been able to give back to the community that’s the most pleasing thing,” Guyana-born Dhaman Kissoon, founder of Advocates for Etobicoke Youth (AFEY), said at the group’s eleventh-annual Children’s Christmas Party.

About 450 children accompanied by parents or guardians converged at Woodbine Banquet Hall on Saturday for the event. Each child was presented with a wrapped toy from Santa and each child and parent were provided with a full meal and a food hamper to take home.

A criminal lawyer who has been a visiting lecturer for 25 years at Queen’s University, Kissoon said in a previous interview at his law firm at 8 Beamish Dr. in Toronto that he was inspired to support the community by Mahatma Gandhi and by his parents, Sugrim and Latchmin Kissoon.

The Law Society of Upper Canada, which regulates lawyers in Ontario, has identified 278 minority lawyers from all parts of the world who in the 200-year-old history of the law society have made a significant difference in the Canadian community. Kissoon is one of those lawyers.

“I’m motivated to do well because I want to make a positive impact in my community,” said Kissoon who serves numerous charities in the community in the areas of education, health or just having fun like on Saturday with Santa Claus on hand.

Kissoon got into the fun as he donned his red shirt while the kids enjoyed face painting, dancing and having their photo taken with Santa.

He said that AFEY helps underprivileged children and that the organization has been instrumental in providing a forum for the young people and law enforcement officials to have a dialogue.

“This organization continues to assist and mentor thousands of underprivileged children each year in Canada,” Kissoon said. As well as the Christmas party, they hold a Thanksgiving dinner for the elderly.

Kissoon said he believes that one cannot separate the practice of law and community involvement. “They are linked closely together. You help people because you are in a position to offer assistance to them.”

The York U economics grad earned a law BA from the University of Kent in England then returned to Canada to obtain an LLB at Queen’s University in Kingston. He has served as president of Brampton Flower City Rotary Club which has raised funds for charity and conducted humanitarian service locally and internationally. Kissoon was twice honoured with the Paul Harris Award, the highest award in Rotary.

“Nothing pleases me more than when I help someone and they have come to this country and they do well. What disappoints me the most is when they come here and they break the law,” said Kissoon who’s community involvement includes the Kissoon Annual Charity Golf Tournament which raises funds for those in need in Guyana, Canada and other parts of the world.

The tournament also supports Toronto Sick Kids Foundation, Guyana Help the Kids and the Three Rivers Kids Foundation.

The Kissoon family decided to add another dimension to their charitable work - the education of children via the memory of their parents with the Latchmin and Sugrim Kissoon Scholarship Fund. This scholarship is in conjunction with the Rotary Club of Brampton Flower City and Pandit Sirju Persaud Scholarship Fund.