

Congratulations to the 2012 Walt Disney World Traditions team

11/22/2011

By Lauren Salisbury

Clammy hands, a vein-pulsing heartbeat and butterflies that know no sleep — public speaking is a fear for many, but for Lisa-Maria Yearwood the haunting memory of laughter made it visceral. After immigrating to the United States from Trinidad and Tobago in the ninth grade, she remembers the pain of addressing her classmates.

“With such a heavy accent, people couldn’t understand me,” she said. “They laughed, and that made me not want to talk in front of people anymore. I went home and told my mom, ‘I’m not doing that again. If I have to take a zero on an assignment, I will.’ I never read in class after that day.”



Lisa-Maria Yearwood, left, celebrates her role as a 2012 Traditions Assistant with her leader, Lisa Carr.

Today, as a member of the 2012 Walt Disney World Traditions team, fear of public speaking is a distant memory, one she overcame with inspiration from the program.

“When I left Traditions [as a new Cast Member seven years ago], I was so inspired,” she said. “I wanted to lead Traditions because of the feeling you get when you leave the program, the feeling that you can do anything in the world. I had to conquer this fear for the audition.”

Lisa-Maria is one of 56 Cast Members selected for the annual team that introduces new Cast Members, Crew Members and Imagineers to the culture and heritage of Disney.

“It is the responsibility of the Traditions assistants to carry on Walt [Disney]’s philosophy with enthusiasm and dedication,” Dick Nunis, former chairman of Walt Disney Attractions, once said. “This



is where it all begins.” Nunis helped develop the first incarnation of the program in 1955 as a newly hired Disneyland Cast Member.



Emily Kohli leads her first Traditions class.

For today’s team, representing decades of the company’s history and heritage is a tremendous privilege.

“Facilitating Traditions is such a great honor because you are there to welcome all the new Cast Members on their first official day with the company,” Emily Kohli said. “I am really looking forward to meeting new Cast Members and hopefully inspiring them to create happiness for all of our Guests.”

For Drew Ostler, it’s an honor to be entrusted with sharing Disney’s values with men and women who may become the resort’s future leaders.

“I have a huge love for Disney,” he said. “I am excited to be a caretaker for this new age of Cast Members.”

The 2012 team members taught their first classes in September and October, and are preparing to begin their official facilitation year in January.

“I’m looking forward to just being able to share enthusiasm and excitement for Disney with the new Cast Members,” Christine Kirk said.

Lisa-Maria says the audition process taught her the power of persistence.

“My story is so many other people’s story,” she said. “Don’t be afraid to fail. I came out on the other end [of the audition process] and I know in the bottom of my belly that this journey is going to lead into so much. It’s been an absolutely exhilarating experience.”

[WDP&R Internal Communications](#)