

Website to ‘raise bar’ on discourse



Promoting discourse: Cummings Zuill, co-founder of TalkWell.org

A website that goes live this week is aiming to provide a platform for commentary on Bermuda’s current affairs.

On TalkWell.org, all contributors will be named and the goal is to stimulate “useful, solution-led dialogue”.

In the lead-up to this week’s public launch, invitees have been posting articles on the site, covering topics ranging from immigration and public education to the economy and same-sex marriage.

TalkWell.org is an apolitical, non-profit enterprise managed through the Bermuda Community Foundation, a registered charity that invests private and corporate donations for the good of the community.

The blog site was created by Cummings Zuill, Tony McWilliam and David Zuill, with support from Myra Virgil of the Bermuda Community Foundation. Mr Zuill, a retired bank executive who founded the Centre on Philanthropy, said: “For years I’ve been frustrated by the tone, poor quality and ineffectiveness of our public discussions, so I am excited to see TalkWell launched as

a well-managed platform to facilitate concise, focused and constructive dialogue.

“The conversations will cover a wide variety of topics and expose us to diverse opinions without the usual rancour, thereby opening our minds to greater understanding and learning.”

Former *Bermuda Sun* editor-in-chief Tony McWilliam, TalkWell’s editor, said that there was a 250-word limit on posts.

“Brevity is an important aspect of the site’s appeal,” Mr McWilliam said.

“Also, every post and comment is monitored prior to publication and no personal attacks, vitriol or inflammatory rhetoric will be posted.

“We want to raise the bar on public discourse and hopefully, this will encourage participation by those who have a lot to offer but find some of the existing social media forums too corrosive.”

Users of TalkWell.org will also find background information and terms of use, and discover how straightforward it is to submit a new topic or comment on existing posts.

Clicking on the “Join Us” button to register carries no obligations, but triggers an e-mail alert to the editor, to approve membership. TalkWell wants thought leaders to spearhead debate on the site.

Myra Virgil, the managing director of the Bermuda Community Foundation, has co-ordinated the development of TalkWell. She underscored the need for “a moderated, online platform for stimulating, thoughtful, solution-led dialogue”, adding: “We are very excited about the possibilities.”

TalkWell is envisaged by its creators as a “vibrant and valuable resource for anyone who cares about Bermuda”.

They said that while issues that arose in Bermuda tended to polarise people, TalkWell wanted to help to “bring

them together”.

“Healthy dialogue helps Bermuda and even the most awkward interactions can bring enlightenment and understanding,” a statement said. “While the focus is on current affairs, content on TalkWell.org will also cover a range of timeless issues such personal wellness, civility and youth development.”

•For more information, visit www.facebook.com/TalkWell