



Jamaican Vibes

Newsletter - December 2010

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COMMUNITY STABILITY LEADS TO POSITIVE CHANGES FOR S-CORNER PROGRAMS

By Angela Stultz, Executive Director

Almost 4,000 people live in the S-Corner inner-city community of Bennet Lands, which now includes 1000 residents living in recently constructed high rise apartments. Bennet Lands is showing tangible signs of community stability that are comparable to life in other poor communities; no gang shootings, homicides, and freedom of movement across traditionally geographic turf divided areas. On a weekly basis Fish fry's are held in different neighbourhood zones and these events attract a wide cross section of residents and even a few outsiders, mixed in age and gender, who enjoy tasty inexpensive dishes and community cohesive vibes. The interactive process and freedom they experience impacts on their psychosocial behaviours and confidence levels to interface with persons outside their social class.



Businesses at the community level for the most part are focused on grocery shops, short term activities, vocational

skill type businesses and income generating products that are dependent on community support and markets. The impact of the global recession and limited job opportunities has forced many residents, especially youth, to become more self reliant and venture into new types of micro retail businesses previously alien to them. The new trend of buying and selling clothing lines and inexpensive Chinese export goods adds to the existing employment, but calls on the individual's ability to access markets outside the geographic safe community zone. In some instances the sellers venture into deep rural parishes to sell their wares. In the past, a large percentage of youth, mainly male, were stigmatized by others, and fearful of venturing outside of the community because of their gender and its associated vulnerable relationship with the police or gangs. With improved community stability, more youth are able to find work both inside and outside the community.

The stability has also enhanced the S-Corner's effectiveness to expand intervention programs that reach a wider target audience. The summer program which operated throughout July had over seventy children between ages 9-15. The number of children attending daily surpassed numbers in our recent history and the enthusiasm was reminiscent of community gatherings. The curriculum included field excursions which exposed children to educational entertainment experience. This was very exciting for the students, who for example, enjoyed the trip to Rockfort Mineral Bath. They played games and interacted with other children who came from other schools.



Community of S-Corner

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S-Corner also restarted our literacy and numeracy program targeting 15-30 year old cohorts, similar to our previous program called Grass Roots College. Two centres - the Grace House Ministry and Progressive Centre - now operate these programs. A graduate teacher is employed on a full-time basis. The organization is also aggressively seeking volunteers from the university and technical college to defray the cost of teaching well needed academic subjects and life skills facilitation on a consistent basis.

JSH supports a range of youth-related programmes that benefit over 4,000 people in the community of S-Corner Clinic & Community Development organization, including:

- Literacy and academic upgrading for children and young adults
- Peace-building community activities
- Parenting outreach and support
- Reproductive health education and support for women and men
- Creation of a DVD on S-Corner's Best Practices in Community Development



We are proud to announce that we have just been awarded a contract by UNICEF to lead a sanitation improvement project in several communities, both inside and outside Kingston, based on our successful work in our own community. This project recognizes our efforts and expertise and allows us to share our experiences to help improve the situation for other communities.

All photos by Nancy Chesher

ST. PIUS X TRAINING CENTRE prepares students for their future

By Christine Post

As part of the JSH Programme Monitoring Team, I recently had an opportunity to visit St. Pius X Training Centre, a small vocational training centre in West Kingston, that is supported by Jamaican Self-Help. While at the Centre, we had a chance to talk to many of the 31 students taking courses in catering, sewing and cosmetology. One young woman told us that she heard of the Centre through a friend, who now had a job in a local restaurant. She said that with the recognized, practical training from St. Pius, she hopes to have a chance at a better future. Another student shared her dream of running her own business, making school uniforms, window coverings and a variety of household items to sell within her community. All the students were busy preparing for their first exams in December, which will cover topics such as customer service and interacting with people from different cultures. We were able to be a part of their practice, as they role-played taking a reservation at a hotel from someone from a different country. We were very impressed with the professional demeanour and quick thinking during the role play, as the students responded to our questions and requests.

Students at St. Pius X Training Centre begin their programme in September, and learn one of three types of vocational skills, as well as life skills including literacy upgrading and practical knowledge such as job interviewing or how to open a bank account. The students are tested on both practical and theoretical aspects of the training, and if successful, graduate in June. Last year, 17 students graduated, and over 70% are now working in their field. The Centre is currently undergoing renovations and curriculum updates so that their graduating students will also attain certification from HEART, the national training institute recognized by both Jamaican and international employers.

BOLT inspires audience with her passion

By Jane Ready-Webster

The 6th Annual Ganley Lecture was held on November 10, 2010, also marking Jamaican Self-Help's 30th anniversary. This year's guest speaker, Margaret Bolt, is a highly esteemed, accomplished and passionate individual whose successes have been made possible partially through the support of Jamaican Self-Help (JSH). Described by JSH founder John Ganley as 'a fantastic agent for change', Bolt's spirit, passion and motivation touched an audience of over 80 people as she spoke of her life of teaching and involvement in education in Jamaica.

Bolt's up-beat, loving spirit toward Jamaica was astounding. She confronted the problem of 'two Jamaicas,' one rich in culture, beauty and essence; the other viewed as problematic, damaged and lacking in hope and resources. The gap between these 'two Jamaicas', Bolt argued, can be attributed to the education system. This system, for example, has children tested at age 12 and then sent to a particular school based on their scores. The separation and labelling of these children at such a young age is harmful to their sense of worth and self-esteem. Bolt works fervently to provide all students with the equal resources for the education they deserve.

The potential that Bolt sees for Jamaica to become prosperous requires working together. In order for Jamaicans to achieve the justice they deserve, they must be empowered and feel self-assured. To be empowered, Bolt stated, 'we must know who we are,' and have better understandings of history, government and economy through accessible education. This education must be available to all Jamaicans, in order to close the gap between the 'two Jamaicas,' and to actively invoke change as a united community.

Bolt's spirit is inextinguishable. She referred to grassroots communities as 'true people, rare people,



Margaret Bolt

people who have a mind and vision... people who know what they want.' She stressed that it is the responsibility of other people to support and enable this empowerment. Together, JSH and its partnerships with groups in Jamaica have made great progress in this change. She felt that JSH has 'set the bar high' for such accomplishments, and that this motivates her to continue to strive for improvement, and never settle for mediocrity.



Margaret Bolt with Ottawa Panel

While in Ontario, Margaret Bolt met with a number of Canadian educators to share best practices. She travelled to Ottawa to meet representatives from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and participated on a distinguished panel of Jamaican-Canadian youth educators and activists on the topic "Change from Within."



Students from St. Theresa's School



UPDATES AND UPCOMING EVENTS

JSH REUNION December 27th

Help us to celebrate our 30th Anniversary! You are invited to the JSH Reunion on Monday December 27 from 2-5pm at the Knights of Columbus Hall in Peterborough. Bring your family, your photos and your updates and learn more about recent JSH programmes. For details visit www.jshcanada.org or facebook Jamaican Self-Help. Please RSVP to the JSH office at 705-743-1671 or jsh@nexicom.net if you can come!

JSH launches our new LOGO

On the occasion of our 30th Anniversary, JSH has updated its image by launching a new logo. The accompanying motto "Empowering People. Building Community." describes the core mandate of our programmes both in Jamaica and in Canada and links the two countries together in a common goal. Watch for updates to our other materials and our online presence in the coming months!



STILL LOOKING FOR A HOLIDAY GIFT IDEA?

JSH has Greeting Cards for sale in singles, and packages of 3 or 12. Each card features a drawing from the children of St. Theresa's Literacy Project and is blank inside so that it can be used for any occasion. JSH also has Gift Certificates available – for a set donation, you can receive a certificate that you can then give for Christmas, a birthday, anniversary, or any other special occasion. For more information about these Gift Ideas, please call (705) 743-1671 or visit our website at www.jshcanada.org.



**Contact us if you would
like to order the cards.**

Each card: \$2

Package of 3: \$5

Package of 12: \$15

Contact the JSH office at 743-1671 or jsh@nexicom.net or visit www.jshcanada.org for details on these events or any other information in this newsletter.

Mark Your Calendar for 2011 One World dinner

The World's Largest Vegetarian Potluck Dinner, Dance and Dessert Auction – Saturday February 5, 6:00pm, St. Paul's Presbyterian Church, Peterborough, Ontario.

Annual JSH Brunch & Auction

Sunday April 17th, 11:30am, Princess Gardens Retirement Residence. Tickets on sale soon!

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Would you like to get more involved with JSH? We have many options to volunteer for the organization: join a committee in Peterborough or Ottawa, come to an event, participate in our youth programme. We have several new fundraising ideas that need your help to be successful: the Change 4 Change campaign invites individuals and groups to collect change at school, work or with family; JSH has packages of note cards for sale with drawings from Jamaican children; we need contributions for our annual yard sale and plant sale, and we now have donation certificates that can be given as alternative gifts for Christmas, birthdays or other special occasions. Please call the office to find out more about how you can help.



JSH would like to thank Community Living Peterborough and Peterborough Community Service Orders for their help with our mailouts.