



JAMAICAN NEWSLETTER VIBES

JUNE 2011

EDUCATION FOR TRANSFORMATION

By Marisa Kaczmarczyk

For many people in Canada and in Jamaica, June marks the end of the school year – a time when teachers, parents and students assess what they have learned over the course of the past 10 months and how they will use their new knowledge in the future. When we take a look at all that has been accomplished by our JSH partners in Jamaica, we see that JSH educational programmes really are transformative.

- *Only 53% of boys in Jamaica passed the Grade 4 Literacy test.*



At St. Theresa's Literacy Project, the literacy levels of children in all four of the project's schools have improved greatly. The Education Officer for the Jamaican Ministry of Education has taken note, remarking that the success rates are much higher than in other similar schools in this rural region of Jamaica. This success is transforming the reputation of the participating schools and creating a positive learning environment for all. The literacy teachers themselves also have an opportunity

for transformation due to JSH assistance; with their earnings, most of the seven teachers have opted to take night courses to upgrade and become certified classroom teachers in the future.

- *There are approximately 142,000 youth who are out of school and out of work and about one quarter of these youth did not go beyond Grade 9.*

At S-Corner, youth are taking literacy classes that not only teach basic reading and math skills, but also impart life skills. Young inner-city Jamaicans take these courses to learn the tools and strategies to improve their living conditions, for example by starting micro-businesses at home.

- *Twenty-percent of Jamaican adults are illiterate and another 15 percent possess only basic literacy skills.*



Even parents are gaining from JSH educational programmes. At St. Anne's Primary School, JSH helps to fund the social worker who has talked with parents and community members about their needs. In response, the School is now offering a Parent Empowerment programme which includes Math and English classes, and plans for computer classes in the future. Over 80 people have signed up for the course and another 20 are on the waiting list. The course is taught by St. Anne's teachers after school; they are volunteering their time to teach these adults because they know that it will have a positive impact on their students and the community at large. Participants will complete the programme with higher reading and math skills, better able to cope with daily life and help their children in the process.

- *One quarter of Jamaican children live in poverty.*

This past winter the staff at each of JSH's seven partners benefitted from a parenting trainers' course. Meeting one day per week for eight weeks, guidance counsellors and other staff learned new techniques to reach out to the community and support parents. The course included a comprehensive resource binder with activities and tools for engaging parents. This training builds the capacity of the participating schools and organizations in their community outreach and involvement. The programme has had a ripple effect; for example, one guidance counsellor has taken what she learned to three different schools where they will all benefit.

These examples are just some of the ways that JSH educational programmes are making a positive difference, transforming individuals and communities to be better able to improve their own lives.

(Statistics from UNICEF and HEART/World Bank reports).

MAKING A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE

In May, JSH Executive Director Marisa Kaczmarczyk sat down with Andrew Rowe, Chair of St. Pius X Training Centre, to discuss how Jamaican Self-Help has impacted his life and the people in his community.

Marisa: Andrew, tell us a little bit about your early encounters with JSH.

Andrew: I'm 38 years old. I went to my first high school that was run by Father Ho Lung, met John and Rosemary Ganley and encountered JSH for the first time. At that time, I didn't know what I would be exposed to. These people... they were very helpful to me as a child. I got assistance for school – they would provide me with lunch money so I would be able to get to school. It was more than that though. I could remember that every time they came, they would actually inquire after my well-being – they were like family and that is where it started.

M: You are an educator now, Andrew. Tell us how you came to be in your position.

A: I finished high school and went to college. JSH funding was able to assist me as well because I went to College but was not able to afford the fees. So through Fr. Ho Lung and the Brothers of the Poor, the first connection to JSH, I was able to go to Teachers' College. I went back to school several times, and took a degree in Administration and Leadership.

M: How has JSH supported you in becoming a community leader?

A: I went off and was teaching as the Dean of Discipline, and I was again impacted by the programme – this time in another capacity. I became the Chairperson for St. Pius X Skills Training Centre, which of course is supported by JSH. It has been over seven years that I have been that Chairperson. I have been dealing with JSH for years, for years, for years... and what has happened is we've developed a kind of family relationship. They've allowed me to grow as a leader, to change the way I do business as an administrator. They've opened my ideas as to how to get funding and how to manage funds, to report, that type of thing. That has now translated into me becoming a Principal of Dupont Primary and Infant School. Through their assistance, through their training, I've been able to do a good job, I would say, as a Principal.

M: Tell us about how people have benefitted from St. Pius X Skills Training Centre.

A: What continues is the different programmes that JSH funds. At the church, in terms of my capacity as a Chairperson and Administrator, I've been able to see other persons getting the kind of benefits I got from JSH. We are talking about persons who have started their own businesses; we're talking about persons who have finished and have returned to be part of the Board. Because I have young people there now who have benefitted, who are now part of the Skills Training Centre board.

So the process continues. It's like paying forward. You're assisted, then you assist someone else. So it spreads and it grows like a wonderful tree. And I have to say that JSH is now a household name. Many persons are out there who have actually benefitted from the programme, who are living good lives in comfort, who are able to impact others simply because they got an opportunity where none existed before. Persons got an opportunity to rethink the way they make decisions just from the education JSH has been able to provide.

M: Is there anything else you would like to add?

If I'm ever asked how important this programme is, I would have to say it is essential. I cannot picture what MY life would be like, for example, if I had not been impacted by JSH. I can honestly say that much of what I have achieved now has been impacted by the assistance I got from JSH. I've met many wonderful people from JSH, and I must tell



you this is a different kind of programme, of organization; it's one where there is honesty, where the people really feel caring for the people that they help, from a deep place. Over the years, they have bent over backwards just to ensure that we are able to develop and to grow as an organization and we can say that we have benefitted in so many ways – in support, in pretty much knowing that there is someone out there – all the way across the world – who is speaking about us, who is spending sleepless nights trying to ensure that we have the things

that we can make a difference at the community level.

So JSH definitely is an essential part of MY life, and just the way that I'm able to impact the community, they are making a world of difference here.

A GREAT PLACE TO START

By Tucker Barton

As part of our global education mandate, Jamaican Self-Help offers two-week awareness trips to Jamaica for Canadian high school youth. These trips are based in Kingston, and include volunteer placements at two inner-city schools and a children's home, evening sessions with community leaders, and cross-cultural activities. Approximately 16 youth and 2 youth assistants are part of each trip, organized once or twice a year by volunteer leaders. Here are some reflections of Tucker Barton, our main Trip Leader, Board member, and a teacher at Trinity College School in Port Hope.

A couple of hours ago I watched a miracle. The students from my school who went on the JSH awareness trips in December and March of this year gave a presentation to five hundred of their peers. They told tales of beautiful relationships that were built, and of eye opening experiences, experiences that allowed them to come back and reflect on their lives and privileges here in Canada. They spoke with passion and tears, and gave fitting tribute to their experiences in Kingston. Perhaps more importantly, they showed that they were comfortable being a tad more humble than they were before they left. For young adults growing up with the pressures of today's world, that is a pretty big step to take in front of your peers.

I have had the privilege of leading these trips for over 10 years now. Although this programme is a small part of what JSH does, this is one of the major ways that our tiny little



NGO impacts the lives of Canadians. Past trip participants are now working for CIDA, for international NGOs such as CARE and Engineers without Borders, and they are working in their communities, fighting for change of all sorts. We're proud that a significant percentage of past participants who had the opportunity to work in schools in Kingston have become teachers themselves, either in Canada or internationally. They are more confident travelling off the beaten track, and the vast majority has continued to be engaged in the world as volunteers, either at home or abroad.

It's hard to imagine that these shifts can happen in just two weeks on the ground in Kingston, and really they don't. The students who come with us usually admit that they're already searching for ways to engage with their world in a more positive way, and to some extent we just open the door to allow them to do that. By depriving them of some of their creature and technological comforts for the trip, we're asking them to

engage in the world in an old fashioned way, which they are surprisingly eager to do. But it's the people that they meet on the ground in Kingston - longtime friends of JSH - who really show them that they can make a difference. To quote Fabian Brown, "it's not rocket science." Through JSH, the students meet people who have dedicated themselves to fighting for change under challenging circumstances. It's pretty hard to come back from Jamaica and not want to do the same. Standing up in front of your peers and confirming your dedication is a great place to start.



JSH LAUNCHES NEW LOGO AND SLOGAN

This past year was our 30th anniversary year, and we marked the occasion by launching our new logo and slogan “Empowering people. Building community.” Developed through a consultation process, the new logo retains elements of our old logo, and the slogan encompasses what JSH strives to do through our seven partners in Jamaica, and our education programme in Canada:

“Empowering people” through literacy programmes, employment and life skills training, building self-esteem and social skills in recreational and cultural activities, and offering professional development to staff in Jamaica. This

part of the slogan also applies to Canada, in our awareness-raising events, youth engagement activities, and volunteer development.

“Building community” in Jamaica means peace building and community development activities in inner-city Kingston, and offering networking opportunities among our partners and others. In Canada, JSH collaborates with other organizations on educational activities in Peterborough or Ottawa. Working together North and South we strive towards our common goal of ending poverty and promoting global social justice.

Jamaican Self-Help Empowering people. Building community.



Logo designed by: Chrystina McNeil.

UPCOMING & ANNOUNCEMENTS

JSH Annual General Meeting

Tuesday June 21, 2011 – 6:00pm

Peterborough Lion's Community Centre (347 Burnham Street, Peterborough)

All Welcome! For info: 705-743-1671

Guest Speaker: Christine Jaros – “Jamaican Seasonal Agricultural Workers in Canada – A View from the Field”

Note: JSH Annual Report will be mailed in September.

Jamaican Self-Help Ottawa Committee presents: An Evening of Storytelling – “Remember When?”

Friday June 10, 2011 – 6:30pm

Tom Brown Arena (141 Bayview Road, Ottawa)

Free Admission – Donations to JSH welcome.

Call 613-843-1762 for details

Looking for a unique travel experience?

JSH TRIP TO JAMAICA - January 2011

For details, contact 705-743-1671 or jsh@nexicom.net

or visit www.jshcanada.org

Programme undertaken with the financial support of the Government of Canada provided through the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).



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Charitable Registration # 899733 7150 RR0001