



JAMAICAN NEWSLETTER VIBES

JUNE 2012



Youth are taking up the challenge...

Being a teenager in Jamaica can be extremely difficult. Growing up in a downtown Kingston neighbourhood, a teenager faces a life of instability – father unknown, mother often away from home to work, younger siblings to look after, little food in the house, nothing to do and few options for the future. With low self esteem and little direction a boy might join a local gang and a girl might look for belonging in a relationship and become pregnant early on, starting the cycle all over again. How can these young people break out of this cycle?



Over the past decade, the government of Jamaica has identified the most pressing problems faced by youth: unemployment, education-related concerns, crime and violence, ignorance of culture, teenage parenting, and lack of positive parental role models. JSH supports community organizations that seek to address these concerns and offer a place for young Jamaicans to take positive steps towards adulthood.

St. Margaret's Human Resource Centre is one of five Centres operated by St. Patrick's Foundation in Kingston that is supported by JSH. What is special about this Centre and this programme is the approach: the staff work with each participating student to achieve his or her educational goals through literacy classes, skills training classes, individual counselling, parental support and community service. The result is that young people who have had very tough lives, struggling with poverty, illiteracy, gang violence and low self-esteem, are guided through a programme that builds their capacity in a holistic way at a pace that fits their needs.

With renewed determination and a new set of skills, graduates go on to complete high school, or enrol in the national vocational training institute, or find work locally.

Local resident, Greg, has a 13-year old daughter with epilepsy and trouble reading. She was in a regular school but made no progress. She came to St. Margaret's three years ago and because of their help, Greg sees a great improvement in his daughter both at home and at school. She especially likes her computer teacher and wants to be a teacher herself. Greg is so pleased to see how St. Margaret's has helped his child.

If you had a chance to meet the Manager, Suzanne Smith, you would understand the dedication and enthusiasm that all the staff at the Centre demonstrate towards their mission. Suzanne is particularly concerned with "her boys" – the ones that would be lost on the street, or even killed by gangs. She takes great pride in knowing that her woodworking course is filled to capacity with over 50

Jamaican Self-Help is an organization of Canadians working in solidarity to foster the development of healthy Jamaican communities through partnership based on mutual respect, understanding and a shared vision of self-determination; and to foster an understanding of global forces (North and South) and their interconnectedness.



students every year, and that these boys would rather spend their Saturdays doing carpentry work at the Centre than hanging out on the street corner.

In another part of the city, **S-Corner Community Development Organization** offers young people several programmes to develop their life skills. Young women gather together at one of the neighbourhood centres to discuss parenting issues with an S-Corner facilitator. Recently a workshop was held with a dozen local women. The sometimes lively debate among the women covered such topics as the responsibilities & roles of moms and grand-moms, the need to teach children values, common rules, social graces, and show kindness and respect, the need for relationship building between parents, addressing health issues of children, including immunizations, and saving money for the future.



In another centre down the street, young adults are back in class to improve their literacy and numeracy skills to a Grade 9 level in order to go back to school or to find work. The course recently added a civics component so that the participants could learn more about their country. Increased enrolment and regular attendance shows that the students find the course interesting and useful, and individuals are improving rapidly in their reading and math.

JSH also supports programmes in other neighbourhoods that focus on the same themes of helping young people gain the skills they need to earn a living, look after their families and be successful in their goals. Through parenting support, academic upgrading, recreational activities, and training in trades like carpentry, catering or sewing, marginalized youth are succeeding in breaking the cycle of poverty and developing skills for life.

Young women gather together and learn new ways to look after their children. And, young adults are back in class improving their literacy and numeracy skills.

Special thanks to: Luke 4 Foundation, OECTA Provincial, and the Sisters of St. Joseph (London) for their support of these two JSH projects this year.

Jamaican youth at risk...

Jamaican Self-Help supports programmes that focus on academic and employment skills development for young people who have fallen between the cracks. In Jamaica, just over 60% of Grade 4 students pass the national literacy test. Those who fall behind in Grade 4 continue to experience problems up to the Grade Six Achievement Test or GSAT. The result of the GSAT determines if they can move up to high school or fall further behind or even drop out of school entirely. GSAT scores fluctuate between 40% and 50% pass rates, with girls outperforming boys by 20 percentage points. This wide disparity creates even more challenges as males between ages 15 and 24 cannot find or keep jobs. Estimates place 145,000 youth, most of them males, out of work.

Lack of education and employment is believed to be a major driver of crime and political instability in the country. Jamaica's youth, particularly boys and young men, are the

main perpetrators and victims of crime. Gang members can be as young as six years old. Sustainable change means addressing the needs of at-risk youth, starting at the elementary level and continuing to young adulthood, in order to reverse the acceptance of violence and provide real alternatives to a life of crime.

Addressing youth issues requires an approach that focuses on prevention: improving the quality of education especially for basic literacy and numeracy; building citizenship and social responsibility; workforce development; reducing youth unemployment to provide alternatives to crime as a career; enabling and encouraging youth to take on leadership roles within communities; and improving parenting skills. JSH programmes fit all these strategies with an aim of offering youth in Jamaica a real chance for success.

(Source: US AID Jamaica Country Strategy 2010-2014)



Youth in Jamaica: Developing Skills for Life

BY KATELYN WINGETT

Katelyn, a 17 year old student in Peterborough, first travelled to Jamaica in March 2012 and will be returning as a JSH youth assistant leader in July.

As children, we all have hopes and dreams; they may include owning your own home, winning the lottery, flying to the moon or becoming Prime Minister. For some, however, they may be simply to having enough food to eat, a bed to sleep in, or seeing a parent or loved one just one more time. These ambitions are driven by the support of family, friends, and especially by those teachers that push us to be all we can be. If it were not for the hard work and dedication of teachers, our youth today – the next generation of leaders - would not have the life skills necessary to improve their quality of life. It is through their education that youth are supported and develop skills needed for success.



As a recent participant on a youth awareness trip to Jamaica with Jamaican Self-Help I have been able to see that some of the most marginalized youth living in Jamaica have very little in the way of resources for their education. In spite of this, however, the teachers are able to impart valuable life skills by using what little they do have to create an environment that helps the students face the challenges they have and to learn how to overcome them.

For example, in the class where I helped, there weren't enough workbooks for all the students. The teacher improvised and made sure that all students were included in the learning and that they all had an opportunity to participate. They had one book between two kids; one student did one page then the other did the next. Once they had finished, the two students would explain to each other how, why, and what they had done to reach that answer. Through this approach the students learned how to share and communicate, patience, and perseverance to accomplish tasks in difficult situations.

The teachers weren't the only ones that taught valuable life skills, and the students were not the only ones to learn. While in Jamaica, I learned so much from the kids. They taught me how to appreciate what I have and most importantly, what true happiness is... life isn't about things, it is about people and relationships and making the most out of every day – in spite of the circumstances you may face. These are things that I will treasure for life.

JSH SUPPORTS THESE YOUTH PROGRAMMES:

IN JAMAICA

S-Corner Community Development Organization

- Youth academic upgrading courses (aged 16-25)
- Parenting outreach and support, including reproductive health education
- Community youth activities such as sports events & community concerts

St. Margaret's Human Resources Centre

- Woodworking and garment making courses
- Community library
- Parenting outreach and support
- Literacy and life skills training including writing resumes, opening a bank account etc.

St. Pius X Training Centre

- Catering, Cosmetology & Garment making courses
- Literacy upgrading and life skills training

Youth Awareness Trips

- Canadian high school students volunteer service and education programme in Jamaica

IN CANADA

- Youth Action Team – Peterborough region group of youth aged 14-25 learn about and take leadership on current global issues
- Student secondary and post-secondary placements at the JSH office in Peterborough

To learn more, or make a donation: www.jshcanada.org • 705-743-1671

JUNE 2012



Jamaica, in the news...

On May 24, 2012, the Jamaican government recently elected in December 2011 presented its 2012-2013 budget to the public. Here are a few excerpts from the Budget Speech of the new Minister of Finance Dr. Peter Phillips:

“At the close of FY 2011/2012, the country’s total public debt stood at \$1.7 trillion <Jamaican> of which the domestic debt was \$912.6 billion and the external debt \$749.6 billion (US\$8.6 billion).”

“The simple truth is that we are spending approximately 80 per cent of our budget to pay the debt and wages; everything else – all the programmes of supplies for government departments, the expenditure for chalk and blackboard, school desks, road repairs, irrigation subsidy, hospital supplies, medicine, police equipment etc. all the rest has to be paid out of the 20 per cent that is left.”

The Minister noted three key objectives for the nation’s medium term programme:

- Fiscal and debt sustainability
- Economic growth and enhanced competitiveness
- Effective social protection

For the full speech: <http://www.jis.gov.jm/pdf/FINAL-MINISTER-PHILLIPS-PRESENTATION.pdf>



Celebrate Jamaica’s 50th Anniversary of Independence 2012!

Come out to a JSH event and join us in marking this important occasion!

For details about other 50th anniversary events, visit www.comehomejamaica.com or www.jamaica50.ca

UPCOMING EVENTS

For more information, please contact JSH 705-743-1671 • www.jshcanada.org.

AUGUST 2, 2012

Hunter Street Caribbean Festival

Entertainment, food, vendors and activities with a Caribbean Flair!

Thursday, August 2; 4 – 9pm
Hunter Street, Peterborough
(between George and Water Sts)

OCTOBER 20, 2012

Caribbean Irie Dinner

Annual JSH event featuring authentic Jamaican food and presentations.

Saturday October 20;
St. John’s Guild Hall,
Peterborough.

NOVEMBER 2, 2012

“Marley”

The latest film on the life and music of Bob Marley – just released.

Friday November 2;
Market Hall, Peterborough.

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



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