



JAMAICAN

NEWSLETTER

VIBES

JUNE 2013



Empowering Youth: Awareness. Solidarity. Action.

By Tucker Barton

JSH organizes trips to Jamaica to foster understanding and offer opportunities for sharing and learning between Canadians and Jamaicans. Ultimately, we hope these connections will form the basis for long-term positive social change.

JSH awareness trips change lives, in Jamaica and in Canada. Each year we take groups of Canadian youth to Jamaica to volunteer at JSH projects. The trips are two weeks long. The students work during the day with one of JSH's partners, and then spend evenings and weekends reflecting on their experiences, sharing in discussions with Jamaican leaders who work in grassroots community development, and taking opportunities to indulge in local culture and activities in Kingston and on the north coast of the island.

As a trip leader over the past twelve years, I've had a chance to watch our partner communities change and develop. In recent years the economic stress in Jamaica has become significantly worse. Life in so many ways is not easy for the people there. The value of the currency continues to fall, while the value of goods is doing the opposite. And yet there are leaders in these communities who continue to run successful programmes that offer opportunities to people that they would not otherwise have.

Last summer, I took a group of students to run a summer camp for 120 children in the S-Corner community. Ten years ago, I wouldn't have felt comfortable working in this



March 2013 trip participants.

area. There was shooting in the lanes, but S-Corner worked hard to help bring peace to this community. Then once there was peace, they instituted after-school programmes, micro business projects, and a host of other services that the community said they needed. With that peace came pride, and it was that pride that my students saw in the children's faces when they showed up at camp to learn every morning. So we felt very welcome and safe in the community. We had the privilege of working alongside the S-Corner staff; my students learned from these individuals how to put yourself on the line to make something work, and that it's sometimes ok to throw what you thought you knew out the window, to learn how to do something differently. Thirty students in a room with 8 desks...you've just gotta learn to think on your feet.

It's that learning that we bring back from Jamaica every year. What seem like big problems here can shrink to an appropriate size after this trip, and the solidarity with Jamaicans brings home a sense of determination too. This

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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.



past March the students spent an evening with Angela from S-Corner who talked about how cuts in funding would affect her centre; for example, ending after-school programmes or closing the health clinic. With changes in Canadian government funding options, JSH no longer has the matching CIDA funds which have allowed us to do so much more in Jamaica. Angela spoke of the incredible impact JSH has had in providing funding on a consistent basis for so many years. The students could see in real terms the loss that funding cuts would mean. They could also see it on the faces of the children that they worked with every day.

They've seen what possibility looks like in Jamaica, and how there are people there who are infinitely capable, if they get

the support they need. So when the students returned to Canada, they immediately took the lead to fundraise to help ensure these important programmes continue.

Our hope as an organization is that the trip participants will be more aware of the broader world around them and of the structures that create global inequality, that they'll feel solidarity with the children, teachers and community leaders with whom they've worked, and that they'll feel empowered to make change in the world. It seems a little ambitious from a two week trip I know, but we've seen it happen. Jamaica is a pretty magical place.

Tucker Barton has been a trip leader since 2001 when John and Rosemary Ganley retired from the role; she is also a high school teacher and currently the President of the JSH Board of Directors.

Making an Impact

"But amongst the poverty and violence there is hope.
A way to end the world's downward spiralling slope.
Even if you impact just one person's life for the better.
You're making a change that can make an impact forever."

(C. Caverly, 2013)

by Christa Caverly

When I first went to Kingston as part of the Jamaican Self-Help Youth Awareness Group I was excited to expand my knowledge of the world, particularly on school systems and poverty. During my time in Jamaica, I was able to have really great conversations with Jamaican children, teachers and teenagers who shared their lives with me and asked about my own. I found myself growing in love with the culture, the busy streets, colourful houses, mountain views and especially all of the children in Mrs. Newland's grade 2N class!

At the beginning I was worried that I wasn't going to impact anyone's life, and that I might not have that moment where my life suddenly changed. I was worried until the day I went to Maxfield Children's Home. Rachel, Ojo and I sat down with seven girls aged ten to fifteen during the afternoon and we all talked about life. I connected with these girls so quickly and they told me their dreams, passions, fears and what bothers them about their lives that they wish could change. One girl named Barbie particularly impacted me. She told me her fear was to die in childbirth like so many other girls that she knew. This scared me because she is only fourteen. Her



Christa teaching at Dupont Primary School.

friend is currently pregnant at only age thirteen. Despite her fears, she still has the dream of becoming a singer! It was a day filled with heavy emotion. During the very last day when the bus rolled up to Maxfield and Barbie saw me and ran over, I knew I had made an impact on her after only one day. It was an emotional farewell.

I felt really happy coming home, which I was confused about. I was expecting to cry and be really sad, which I was, but didn't expect to feel so joyful. Reflecting back though I know it's because I had the opportunity to travel in a way that was completely new to me. I met so many amazing people - both participants and Jamaicans who have made an impact on my life and how I see things. I feel that Jamaica has done a lot of great things for me and I hope that I can give back as much as I've gotten from this experience. Thank you, Jamaican Self Help for the opportunity, the lessons, and motivation that you have given me.

Christa Caverly is a student at Campbellford District High School. She participated in the JSH Awareness trip to Jamaica in March 2013.





Shining Stars

Sophia Rashid-Khan

Past JSH Trip Participant
& Youth Leader



The other day I opened one of my old journals from the trip I took with Jamaican Self Help. Aside from cringing at the terrible grammar and phrasing of my seventeen year old self, I had to smile. It is clear that I had no idea then of the magnitude of the trips' importance in shaping who I have become today. From

musing about poverty and the power structures that are in place to perpetuate it, to discussions about what it means to be a global citizen, the trip was central in fostering a sense of duty to strive for social justice.

Fast forward 5 years and I've got a Bachelor's degree under my belt and am planning the next big step. Although the trip is a faded memory, the values that it instilled are still very much a part of the decisions and paths that I make for myself. Whether it is seeking out volunteer positions in my local community, or thinking about how best to make my professional career impact the less fortunate in a positive way, the seeds that JSH has sown are beginning to grow.

However, the best part of the entire experience is not my own goals that have arisen from it, rather, it's knowing how many other participants, both past and present, went on the very same trip. When I imagine our eventual collective impact on the world, I realize the true power of trips like JSH. This sort of influence is by no means insignificant and sets JSH apart from other charity organizations. Not only does Jamaican Self-Help provide funding and cooperation with various Jamaican NGO's on the ground, but it has also encouraged a cohort of youth to think and act constructively to do their part to create social justice.

Sophia was a participant on the 2007 JSH trip and a youth leader in 2008. Upon her return, she volunteered in northern First Nations' communities and is currently pursuing a degree in medicine with a focus on disadvantaged communities.

Kevin Clarke

S-Corner Volunteer
& Community Leader

by Marg Hundt

"You have to look at life as taking small steps towards a goal."

(Kevin Clarke, Nov. 2012)



Growing up, Kevin Clarke did not have an easy life, but he had lots of support from strong people like his grandmother and Angela Stultz, the Director at S-Corner. 17 years ago Kevin moved from the country to Kingston with his grandmother. He didn't know his father. His grandmother lost five sons to violence. It would have been easy for him to follow the family tradition into the gang world, but his strong faith and the support of his grandmother and Angela, who were there to listen, guide and support him, enabled him to change. He has no criminal record. As a youth, Kevin earned a partial scholarship for school but without sufficient funds couldn't pursue his education until S-corner gave him a stipend to continue. The passion in his voice and manners show just how grateful he is for that support.

Today Kevin is married and has a 10 year old son in Grade 5. He used to work in a shoe factory but now has a better job working for the government. He owns a house in S-Corner's neighbourhood.

As an alumnae of this community and S-Corner programmes, he has committed to giving back. He now coaches football, counsels kids and helps out wherever he is needed. In 2012, he was invited to travel to Brazil with S-Corner as a community spokesperson to meet potential funders and develop a new programme for community youth. He wants Jamaican Self-Help donors to continue to work with S-Corner because of the positive impact they make.

From an interview with Marg Hundt,
JSH Board member, November 2012.



Acting Locally, Thinking Globally

By Ayendri Perera and Trevor Weir

Youth 4 Global Change (Y4GC) is a Peterborough-based program driven by youth who are committed to social and environmental justice and the eradication of all forms of inequality, with the support of Jamaican Self-Help. This year Y4GC decided to challenge climate change, one of the most pressing global issues of our generation. Jamaica and other island nations will be impacted by rising sea levels that cause coastal erosion and put low lying areas at risk of permanent submersion. Jamaica will also feel the effects of more frequent and severe hurricanes, storms, droughts and floods. People who live on the coast and whose livelihoods depend on coastal resources face displacement and lower living standards.

Y4GC decided to take local action on this global issue by challenging the proposed use of "Line 9," a pipeline that runs south of the Peterborough region. Enbridge would like to use this pipeline to carry tar sands bitumen from Sarnia to Montreal. Not only would this result in the expansion of the tar sands, but using this pipeline would also pose a high risk for a damaging spill. Y4GC has been accepted to comment at the National Energy Board's public hearing on the issue.

Another way we are fighting climate change is by physically creating the world in which we would like to live. We have a plot at the Liftlock Community Garden and Y4GC is growing a variety of vegetables using permaculture practices. Trevor Weir, a member of Y4GC, says that *"Planting a seed can be revolutionary - it challenges climate change by not having our food shipped here from miles away, replenishes soil and grows good food for our community."* We will be donating what we grow to the OPIRG food bank as a way to give all people in our community access to fresh and healthy food.

A Real Cultural Extravaganza!

On Friday May 24, members of the Ottawa community were treated to an evening of talented and entertaining performers who shared the many facets of African and Caribbean culture – from traditional Jamaican folksongs, to Cuban-inspired jazz to colourful African dance. Over a dozen performing groups, guided by MC and well-known radio host Sarah Onyango, donated their time to help raise funds for Jamaican Self-Help projects and for Camp Jumoke, for children with sickle cell disease. Several hundred people enjoyed the evening, some dancing and others laughing with the performers. Special thanks to the JSH Ottawa Committee and Ni Wewe Tu Choral Group for organizing a successful event!



JSH Ottawa Committee members
Amalia Gentles and Stacey-Ann Morris.

UPCOMING EVENTS

For details, visit www.jshcanada.org
or call the JSH office at (705) 743-1671.

FRIDAY, JUNE 21ST

Jamaican Self-Help Annual General Meeting & Volunteer Appreciation

Come and hear about JSH activities and celebrate another successful year. Includes light dinner and social. All welcome!
Please RSVP to the JSH office at (705) 743-1671.

5:30-8:30pm, Peterborough Lion's Community Centre,
347 Burnham Street, Peterborough.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 1ST

Annual Hunter Street Caribbean Festival

Live music, dance, food with a Caribbean flair! Children's activities. Free admission.
All are welcome!

4-10pm – Hunter Street, Peterborough.



www.jshcanada.org | 705-743-1671 | info@jshcanada.org

P.O. Box 1992, Peterborough, Ontario, Canada K9J 7X7

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