



JAMAICAN NEWSLETTER VIBES

MARCH 2013



Volunteers Build Community

By Val Davidson

In September of 2012, my husband Dave Bond and I attended a fundraiser for Jamaican Self-Help that was held at the home of our neighbours, Janice Mackenzie and Bill Blair. It was a fun evening of food, music and crazy hijinks trying to raise some money. When I asked what the money would be used for, I was told that JSH wanted to help refurbish a library at Tavares Gardens Primary School in Kingston. They needed shelving, some work tables and perhaps a bit of painting. After raising the money, they would need some volunteers to go there and help do the work.



Val works with students at Tavares Gardens Primary School

I immediately thought that Dave and I could contribute to this project.

He is a builder and I am a huge believer in books and reading especially for children! But mostly.... Dave is a builder! Shelves would be a breeze for him.



Finished mural at the school.

So, it happened that we, along with three others from the JSH fundraiser, winged our way to Kingston, Jamaica on January 18th of this year. Murray Leadbeater, who is also a builder, and Dave would be in charge of shelving, a cabinet and a desk for the new library. Joyce Mackenzie and Liz Sine would work with some of the students who were in need of extra attention, and I had the opportunity to make a wall outside of the library a little brighter by painting a mural. As my "art" is jewellery, this task was a little daunting for me, but before we left I had enlisted the talents of my friend and neighbour, Corina Chester who sketched out a lovely design for the mural in a mere 20 minutes!

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.



Our week at Tavares was a flurry of activity.

Dave and Murray worked at a nearby community woodshop which had been scouted out prior to our trip. The owner of the shop, Ricky, was invaluable to this project and worked together with Dave and Murray throughout the week.



Murray and Dave building shelves.

Ricky, the woodshop owner.

Others from the school and community helped even before we arrived to prep the room and have everything ready for us. Everyone, staff and especially the students, were excited to have us there. No doubt we were a huge distraction from their normal routine!

Once I had the painting of the wall organized, many of the kids came to help me. Initially they were very shy, but as the week went on, they would gather around me hoping that they would be picked to be my helper. It was important to me that the kids participated in the mural so that for years to come, they could say that they had helped with this project!

So, after 5 days of working we had completed our tasks. Friday was hectic finishing up the installation of the shelves, and the last minute touches on the mural. Joyce and Liz were fortunate to have gone on a field trip with the football team to see a game, which of course, Tavares Gardens won! That afternoon we were honoured with a ceremony to thank us for coming to help and to open their new library. We were surprised and very touched to be presented with plaques “for invaluable service to the Tavares Gardens Primary School Library”.

We were also treated to some skits and songs by the kids. Joyce was especially happy to have the recorder band play for us as JSH funds the music program at the school. It was all so delightful and it was very clear that everyone appreciated our time and efforts on their behalf.

During our time outside of the school, we were also very busy, but certainly had time to relax and enjoy the culture of the country. Dave celebrated his 50th birthday while we were in Kingston and we had an amazing dinner at a seafood restaurant in Port Royal which is a fishing village about 35 minutes out of the city.

We were very fortunate to catch a Jamaican Reggae legend, Ras Michael, at a local restaurant/bar which is well known for its live music. We visited Devon House, a couple of botanical gardens, the local craft market and the culmination of the trip was an excursion up into the mountains to stay overnight. The drive up was a little unsettling but once we arrived, it was incredibly beautiful! The Doctor Birds were there to greet us and it just happened to be a full moon that night...just what we ordered!!

All in all, this was quite an experience for both of us. Joyce and Liz were perfect as our fearless leaders and Murray was a great travelling and working companion. Special thanks to everyone who contributed to the fundraiser to make this library a reality!

We felt that we had accomplished something useful, had a chance to learn about our hosts' lives and also had time to relax and enjoy.

We definitely would do this again!



Jaheim Davis painting.

Volunteers Val, Dave, Murray, Liz and Joyce.



Beginning in this newsletter, JSH will be featuring individuals in Jamaica and in Canada who have been part of JSH programmes – as volunteers, participants, leaders, staff or supporters. Each story reveals how an individual, in his or her own way, contributes to building our global community.



Shining Stars



Rory Hopkins Encouraging Success at St. Margaret's

I'd like to introduce you to Rory Hopkins whose life is a wonderful success story. Rory was a high school dropout who grew up in

the neighborhood adjacent to St. Margaret's Human Resources Centre in the inner-city community of Olympic Gardens in Kingston, Jamaica. He was a smart kid but in his early teens he really lacked direction. It was tough living in the ghetto. There was a tremendous amount of pressure and there was a time when Rory could have easily joined a gang. Rory believes St. Margaret's changed his life and provided him with a focus.

He found that St. Margaret's was different than high school. The teachers at the Centre took a real interest in their students and provided them with personal attention and encouragement. Rory's teachers were patient and understanding and wanted to give him a true second chance. It was this second chance that Rory was looking for himself as well. Rory worked hard and was successful in the woodworking program, and soon he was helping his fellow students. He became the instructor's official assistant and from that position went on to become an instructor himself.

The contribution that Rory now makes to St. Margaret's is not unlike that of his former instructor. He is patient and understanding and good at teaching. The key difference is that Rory has real empathy for his students because their roots are his roots. Rory understands the "tough kid" who has had so many hard knocks he is reluctant to engage and hard to reach. In the construction program where Rory's students are good with their hands, they begin to develop a little self-confidence which gradually overshadows the problems they had in earlier learning experiences. This confidence, coupled with Rory's encouragement, can be life-changing factors for these students - just as the support of St. Margaret's staff enabled Rory to "push forward and change his life."

Nancy Chesher, JSH Programme Committee.

Based on a personal interview in December 2012.

Manfred Pieske Raising Funds for Literacy



UNDERGROUND RAILROAD BIKE TOUR

On May 7, 2013, Peterborough cyclist Manfred Pieske will begin a 4000 km bike tour following the Underground Railroad from Mobile, Alabama to Owen Sound Ontario to raise money for Jamaican Self-Help. Manfred came to JSH with his idea to do this fundraising tour because he has visited Jamaica many times and wanted to help make a difference. JSH is grateful for his support.

Visit www.manfredsbikerepair.com/blog to learn more about Manfred's bike tour, or to donate visit www.jshcanada.org under "special funds."



JSH Awarded 2-Year Grant

from the Ontario
Trillium Foundation

With support from the Ontario Trillium Foundation, JSH will be enhancing our youth leadership and community engagement, improving our online presence – our website and use of social media tools, and highlighting the immense contributions made by volunteers to furthering JSH's mandate.

2012 Annual Ganley Lecture

On November 14, 2012, JSH welcomed educator, performing artist and activist Michael St. George for the Annual Ganley Lecture in Peterborough. Through the topic of "Art, Revolution and Activism in Shifting and Shaping Communities", and his experience as a Jamaican-Canadian artist and youth facilitator, Michael presented examples of Jamaican leaders who have contributed to positive social change, and challenged the audience to come together to continue the efforts. Michael is a founding member of the Turn Around Project for the Arts (TAP), a Canadian-based volunteer programme that uses the arts to develop youth leadership. JSH has recently partnered with TAP to support an arts-based project for youth in Jamaica.



Michael St. George and J Reid

Exciting new way to donate – Your bank's online bill payment service!

You can now easily make a donation to JSH while completing routine online banking. To date, we have partnered with the Peterborough Community Credit Union, CIBC, Scotiabank and the Royal Bank. If you bank elsewhere, please call our office – we will be adding more institutions this spring. To donate to JSH online, search for Jamaican Self-Help Charity and create JSH as a bill payment/payee. You will require your account number which can be found on your address label with this newsletter (or you can contact the office).

You can still donate at our office and at special events using debit, Visa, Mastercard and American Express. On the website we have added PayPal to the existing option of CanadaHelps, and of course, we continue to accept cheques by mail or in person if you happen to be in the downtown Peterborough area.

UPCOMING EVENTS

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

APRIL 28, 2013

Jamaican' Me Shine – JSH Annual Fundraising Event

Auction – Hors d'oeuvres – Entertainment.
Tickets \$40/person (\$20 tax receipt).
Contact JSH for details or to order tickets.

**11:30am-2:30pm, Princess Gardens Atrium
100 Charlotte St., Peterborough.**

MAY 24, 2013

Caribbean Cultural Extravaganza

This fundraising event for Camp Jumoke (Sickle Cell Disease) & Jamaican Self-Help features performances by Dana Grant, Caribbean Voices, Ni Wewe Tu, Kabungulu Gang and more!
For details, call 613-843-1762 or 613-834-1718.

**7:30 pm, Ottawa Mennonite Church
1830 Kilborn Ave., Ottawa**



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