

Children First, JN Foundation honour Mandela's legacy



PHOTO BY KAREN SUDU

Britonie Ramsingh designs a birthday message for Nelson Mandela on a montage on Wednesday.

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SPANISH TOWN, St Catherine:

EIGHT-YEAR-OLD Britonie Ramsingh of Spanish Town, St Catherine wants former South African President, Nelson Mandela to know she was one of thousands of Jamaicans who joined in the observance of Nelson Mandela International Day on July 18.

"I know that today is his birthday," she told **The Gleaner**, as she designed a birthday message on a montage mounted at Children First, a non-governmental organisation in Spanish Town, St Catherine.

It was the first time since 2009, when the day was conceived by the Nelson Mandela Foundation, that

the country participated in the celebration.

For this year's observance, themed 'Take action, inspire and make everyday a Mandela Day', Jamaicans were called upon to dedicate 67 minutes of their time to the cause of children throughout the country. This is synonymous with the 67 years Mandela dedicated to fighting for the rights of humanity.

ACT ON 67

So the Jamaica National Building Society Foundation partnered with Children First, St Catherine, and the Young Men's Christian Association in Kingston to host two simultaneous wellness and recreational clinics, dubbed 'Act on 67' in celebration of the day.

The health component of the

clinic was not implemented at the Spanish Town location. However, the more than 200 children, including Britonie, who gathered at Children First, enjoyed the recreational activities.

"At this particular location, (Children First) it's more presenting the work of Nelson Mandela, so we have a short movie, we have giveaways, storytelling, we are also engaging the children in the language and the culture of South Africa, in general," Warren Gordon, e-media officer, JN Foundation, told **The Gleaner**.

Gordon hinted at the prospect of the foundation embarking on similar initiatives in other parishes over time.

SPREADING THE MESSAGE

"We hope that after we have done our assessment that we can actually do this sort of clinic in other parishes, not only on Nelson Mandela Day, but throughout the rest of the year, so this is like a pilot for us to figure out if a project of this nature is sustainable to be carried out islandwide," Gordon explained.

Claudette Richardson-Pious, executive director, Children First, hailed the opportunity, for her organisation to participate in the celebration, as a milestone.

"I am excited, elated, and happy that it's happening. I had the honour of meeting Nelson Mandela about nine years ago, and he is really a very vibrant, special person and for my organisation to be hosting this event. It's really, really a milestone in the history of the organisation," Richardson-Pious told **The Gleaner**.

She said a montage with messages designed by some participants would be sent to Nelson Mandela, who was born on July 18, 1918.

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