

The Gleaner's HONOUR AWARDS

JAMAICA 50 EDITION



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Twenty-seven participants in the Savanna-la-Mar Resolution Project joined members of the JNBS Foundation team, Action volunteers, and trainers from the Jamaica Youth Advocacy Network for a group shot before heading out into the streets of Savanna-la-Mar for a photography tour on Thursday April 12. The one-week camp (April 10-14) implemented by the JNBS Foundation, equipped the youngsters, ages 10-19 with digital cameras and provided training in photography and advocacy. The aim of the project is to foster youth activism as a means of inspiring positive transformation within four volatile Savanna-la-Mar communities: Barracks Road/Gully Bank, Grotto, Seaton Crescent and Russia. Since 2004, the Resolution Project, conceptualised by JNBS' General Manager, Earl Jarrett, has been implemented as an annual competition programme in rural high schools across Jamaica.

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JNBS: Helping people find a way

HELPING JAMAICA through partnership is one of the main tenets of the Jamaica National Building Society Foundation (JNBS Foundation).

A member of the JN Group, it is the outreach arm of the 138-year-old society and its subsidiaries. Established in 1990, it takes an integrative and sustainable approach to projects involving economic and community development; arts culture and heritage; youth and education; and health security and safety.

"A lot of what we are trying to do is strengthen communities at the core rather than come in and deliver something. We want to strengthen them so that they can do it for themselves," said JN Foundation's general manager Saffrey Brown about the Foundation, which has been nominated in the voluntary service category of this year's Gleaner Honour Awards.

Established in 1990, the Foundation grants funding to community organisations to execute projects; spearhead their own projects; and partners with other organisations to deliver projects.

"We also offer technical support so we could come in and work alongside you to help you strengthen, so there are many different avenues and there are different levels of involvement that we provide," Brown added.

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The Foundation is involved in myriad projects islandwide. One of note is Action Jamaica, a national volunteer project, which is a strategic approach to mobilising volunteers to tasks, which fit their interest and skill sets. It all began because Jamaicans were clamouring to volunteer.

"We recognised that a lot of people kept on asking us, how can I get involved? So we realised that there was no central point for persons interested in giving back to do so," said Anna-Kim Robinson, project officer. Brown added that the Foundation's active



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Saffrey Brown (right), general manager of the Jamaica National Building Society (JNBS) Foundation presents Kamille Kirlaw, student of Knox College with her prize for winning the 'Best Heritage Photo' last year. She also won the JNBS General Manager's Award for Best Photo and a Special Achievement Certificate.

Facebook page was kept abuzz with civic-minded Jamaicans wanting to play their part. So they created a database of volunteers, where persons can sign up online and match them with upcoming volunteer opportunities.

The response has been overwhelming, resulting in a database of approximately 300 volunteers from all over the island.

"What we hope to do is not just provide volunteers for our programmes, but lots of worthy programmes or organisations that just need a little extra help in terms of manpower," said Brown.

Another project draws on the input of JN members and other stakeholders, the Member Advisory Council (MAC), which gives each JNBS branch funding to allocate to a project selected by the branch manager and JN members.

"That is about our members owning the future for their community," said Brown. "So they decide where the funding goes in terms of local projects. And that's a way of giving back to our members, so they can have a say in how their communities develop," she noted. "It's also

recognising that they understand their communities better than we understand their communities."

VALUABLE SERVICE

In April 2012, the Font Hill community in St Thomas benefited from MAC, when the Font Hill Health Centre was reopened after being closed since 2009, because it was dilapidated.

"It's what is called a Type 1 health centre. The purpose is to take healthcare to the people," explained Dr D'oyen Smith, who serves a dual role in the parish, as the medical officer of health and parish manager. Dr Smith explained the importance of the health centre to the community as it focuses on preventive health measures.

One includes dispatching community health aids to conduct home visits to educate parents on proper child nutrition, immunisation and other preventive health measures. This service was suspended for that period. Community members were forced to journey to the nearest health centre in Seaford. With these hindrances, Dr Smith pointed out that community members would forego healthcare because of



PHOTO BY DALTON LAING

In this file 2010 photograph from left: Robert Neish, executive director for the Digicel Foundation; Saffrey Brown, Jamaica National Building Society (JNBS) Foundation's general manager and Club President for the Ys Menette, Bernice Wright break ground for the \$16 million resource centre sponsored by JNBS Foundation with support from Digicel Foundation.

the expenses involved in travelling to an alternative centre. The reopening of the centre has greatly benefited the community. "It's more than valuable what they have done for us," said Dr Smith, adding that the centre has come at a time when the even more essential facility, Trinity Ville, located in the same community was just damaged during Hurricane Sandy.

"It really has come at the perfect time," he said.

One of the Foundation's oldest projects, the Resolution Project, involves using photography to advocate for issues affecting high school and community youth.

"We have a series of workshops where volunteer photographers teach them a little about photography, photojournalism, how do you tell a story using the camera," said Robinson.

Recently, a special project was completed with 15 boys from the Alpha Boys' Home. The four-day session saw the young men focusing their lenses on sites many had never seen before.

"We took them to different historical sites across downtown Kingston and asked them to take photographs, and then we had a little exhibition and then we had a treat for them," said Robinson.

"JN's Resolution Project did a great job of demonstrating how people who might not be willing or able to communicate verbally are excited and very capa-

ble to communicate in a visual manner. Photography is also a rewarding vocation and one that will add to the boys' potential to be productive citizens after leaving Alpha," said Sister Susan Frazer, director of Alpha Boys' School in an email interview, noting that they will be able to pass on this skill to others as the cameras were donated.

Generally, Robinson said the project has a positive impact as the students are proud of their work. Brown added that the participants' work is showcased at a permanent exhibition at the Norman Manley Airport, as well as at international exhibitions. Twenty-one entries in the last National Art Competition yielded most of the awards to include best photo.

"At the end of the day what we really want to do, we want to make a change. Some of the changes we want to make have to do with how people feel about themselves, how they feel about their future, their communities," said Brown.

Built on the concept of mutuality, JNBS, the largest building society in the Caribbean and the third largest financial institution in Jamaica, gives back to the Jamaican people and communities across the island, by providing financial and technical support to projects and programmes both at the community and at the national levels.