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Parents Get Training in Protecting Children from HIV and AIDS

- Scotiabank Parenting Seminars held across the island

Approximately 2,000 parents across the island are slated to attend a series of parenting seminars on HIV and AIDS, beginning April 17 through to April 26. The seminars, which are being planned by Scotiabank, are aimed at improving parents HIV and AIDS awareness levels in each parish and guiding them on how to discuss issues of sexual behaviour with their children. The seminars will also highlight parental responsibility in protecting young children from HIV or other Sexually Transmitted Infections.

Outreach officers from the Ministry of Health and other social workers from various non-governmental organizations will form of the resource team scheduled to make presentations and engage parents in interactive discussions at each seminar. According to Joylene Griffiths Irving, Director of Public, Corporate and Government Affairs at Scotiabank, “the seminars which are being planned as part of Scotiabank’s National Primary School HIV and AIDS Debating Competition, are seeking to reach parents, after identifying gaps in parents’ knowledge levels”.

According to Mrs Griffiths Irving, the Competition found that parents were not fully informed about the issue of HIV and AIDS and were unable to discuss sexual related topics with their children. Further probing and discussions also demonstrated that parents were sometimes unknowingly putting their children at risk of infection. This highlighted the need for all parents to be become aware of their responsibility in protecting their children against HIV and other sexually transmitted infections.

The Debating Competition, which is being hosted under the theme, “Speak Up! Speak Out!” saw over 360 children from 90 schools across the island debating various moots on HIV and AIDS through a series of cluster and regional debates which began in February 2007. The Competition is aimed at raising awareness levels among young children and changing attitudes towards persons living with the disease, by fighting stigma and discrimination while promoting healthy lifestyles.

Scotiabank’s commitment to the fight against the spread of HIV and AIDS in Jamaica extends beyond staging the Debates and Seminars to include a series of HIV Awareness Road Shows across the island, including parishes with the highest rates of infection. The shows are held in collaboration with several local organizations that work in HIV and AIDS prevention programmes including the Ministry of Health’s Parish AIDS Committees and Regional Health Authorities, the Jamaica Red Cross and Children First “Bashy Bus Crew”.

The Bank is also a founding member to the Jamaica Employers Federation Business Council on HIV AIDS. As a signatory, it has committed itself to become more active in spreading HIV awareness, prevention and anti-discrimination messages in the workplace.

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