



For Immediate Release

Kingston, Jamaica

March 8, 2007

Black River Residents Support testing for HIV and AIDS

- Through Scotiabank's HIV and AIDS Road Show

Several residents of the rural town of Black River took advantage of the opportunity to find out their HIV status last weekend at a *Scotiabank HIV and AIDS Awareness Roadshow* held in their town square. Several local agencies involved in the fight against HIV and AIDS partnered with the Bank to mount exhibitions, make demonstrations, and provide one on one counseling for the audience. The show focused on prevention, protection and anti-discrimination messages.

The Bank has decided to work with local agencies from these communities to sustain the efforts at lobbying persons to become more aware of the disease and change their behavioural patterns. The Jamaica Red Cross, The St. Elizabeth Parish AIDS Committee, St. Elizabeth Health Department and the Children's First Group with the Bashy Bus Crew were all live on spot with data on HIV statistics in the parish, resource material on the disease and one-on-one counseling.

The diverse audience of school children, young adults and more mature persons paid close attention to the displays and demonstrations on condom usage for both males and females. The Jamaica Red Cross also used the event to promote their new *Faces Campaign*, which underscored the point that you cannot know someone's HIV status by looking at the person. Mrs. Taylor, from the St. Elizabeth arm of the Jamaica Red Cross explained the Society's participation in the road show. "Our campaign here today

features several close up images of young people with inscriptions all over their faces. This is our new approach to remind people that nobody has their status written on their face. Testing and safe sex is always the way to go.”

Another outstanding participant in the Roadshow was the Children First ‘*Bashy Bus*’ from Spanish Town, St. Catherine. The ‘*Bashy Bus*’ Crew was very creative in reaching young adults and students with the messages of abstinence and protection through as they used dramatic presentations.

The Black River HIV AIDS Roadshow was organized as part of Scotiabank’s thrust to lead the corporate fight against HIV and AIDS locally. Scotiabank International has also openly declared its commitment to help in the fight against HIV in the Caribbean and across the world. Joylene Griffiths Irving, director of Public, Corporate and Government Affairs, explains Scotiabank involvement in promoting HIV and AIDS Awareness. “Scotiabank Jamaica is leading the corporate thrust to actively promote HIV and AIDS awareness and behavior modification initiatives in the island. We are committed to getting the message out there and will be organizing at least two similar Roadshows in Montego Bay and St. Ann. Both parishes have high infection rates and we want to see those numbers trending downwards.” Mrs. Griffiths-Irving went on to explain that the Bank’s National Primary School HIV and AIDS Debating Competition is also seeking to reach parents and their children as part of our target audience.

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

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