

For Immediate Release

Kingston, Jamaica

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Inner-City Youths get ‘reflective and inspiring’ Break from Community

-at Easter Camp funded by Scotiabank

A group of seventeen (17) inner-city youth from Matthews Lane took a break from their community for a short stay in a motivational and training Easter camp held in Moneague, St. Ann over the Easter holidays. The youngsters, which included girls and boys are all from the Vision of Hope Nurture Centre which operates in the West Kingston area. The camp, which was being funded by Scotiabank, sought to take the children who live under sometimes harsh physical and emotional conditions from their negative surroundings to ‘de-stress’ themselves in a space, which was therapeutic, rejuvenating and developmental.

Georgia Benaiah co-ordinator of the Vision of Hope Nurture Centre explained that “living conditions in these communities can be stressful, and for kids, this is multiplied stress as they don’t know how to deal with the issues. The camp was a great place to inspire change, help them to address some of their problems, and provide opportunities for new training and strengthening of their knowledge in specific areas.”

Several guest speakers visited the camp and trained the youngsters in different areas including farming, career counseling, self-motivation and goal-setting. Mrs. Benaiah noted that the one-week Easter camp was very emotional and spiritual. We helped the children get in tune with their spiritual side and also sorted out many personal challenges they were experiencing. She also noted that the camp was clear space to dream about their own life and have a vision for themselves, outside of the closed environment in which they are forced to live.

The Vision of Hope Nurture Centre is a second home to several young children and teenagers from Matthews Lane where they get help with homework, remedial education, recreational and skills training. The students, who often are from communities where they experience violence or witness other negative behaviours, often struggle to cope in a balanced way and are not usually able to get individual counseling to help them overcome the challenges they face.

Scotiabank assisted the camp for the third year with financial support to help the organizers to cover the costs for meals and accommodation. Mrs. Joylene Griffiths Irving, Director of Public, Corporate and Government Affairs explains the Bank's commitment to the project "the Vision of Hope Nurture Centre is doing a tremendous job with the children, it is heartwarming to see the children's delight as leave for the camp each year. We are happy that we are able to assist with this programme, which exposes the kids to a new environment in a positive way, so that they can dream and have a vision for their lives. It is through projects like these that we will be able to inspire change in Downtown Kingston and help to truly rebuild the communities and change lives."

Scotiabank volunteers also assisted the camp as assistants, guest speakers and guidance counselors for the one-week period. The Bank is also looking at providing volunteers to assist the programme on an ongoing basis as the Centre is hampered in its outreach efforts by a limited number of volunteers. Mr. Benaiah explained the need for further assistance to help the Nurture Centre expand its reach. "We have been doing this project from 2000, but because of limited resources, the need is very underserved. Our remedial education and homework programme is yearning for volunteers to help; just two hours per evening would go a far way." Mrs. Benaiah also explained that because the communities do not provide sound recreational programmes the students also need resource persons to act as volunteers to expose them dancing, singing, music or drama. She noted that this training would assist the students in identifying a positive outlet for their energies and it will help to pull them off the streets.

Visions of Hope is continuously seeking to reach more children and teenagers from the community who are on the streets, however, they are unable to do so due to limited resources.

Persons may contact the Nurture Centre to volunteer their skills by calling 772 9913 or 926 8843.

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For more information, contact:

Simone Hull
Public Relations Specialist
Public, Corporate & Government Affairs
Scotiabank Centre
Tel: 932.0549; Mobile: 322.3233

Joylene Griffiths Irving
Director
Public, Corporate & Government Affairs
Scotiabank Centre
Tel: 932.0565; Mobile: 909.5211